

Judicium Discretionis:

OR

A just and necessary

AP O L O G Y,

FOR

The Peoples *Judgement*

OF

PRIVATE DISCRETION,

EXHIBITED

Against the arrogant *Pretences* and imperious
Suggestions of *Tannerus*, *Valentia*, *Bellarmino*,
with other Advocates of the *Papal Tyranny*;

AND

Tendred to the consideration of all those, who would
secure themselves against *Antichristian* impostures and
delusions.

Basil. t. 2. *Moral. Reg.* 72. p. 372.

Δὴ τῶν ἀκροατῶν—δοκιμάζεν τὰ παρὰ τῶν διδασκάλων
λεγόμενα, καὶ τὰ μὴ σύμφωνα ταῖς γραφαῖς δέχεσθαι, τὰ
δὲ ἄλλοτρια ἀποβάλλειν.

L O N D O N,

Printed for *Elizabeth Calvert*, at the *Black*
spread Eagle in *Duck-lane*. 1667.

Indian Dispositions:

A just and necessary

APOLLO

FOR

The People's

OF

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To all such in these Nations
as are true hearted to the
Protestant Interest, especi-
ally those of the Laity.

S I R S,



AMONGST all the Con-
troverfies which at this day
are agitated with so much
heat and vigour, in this li-
tigious and unquiet world,
there is scarcely any of greater use, or
higher importance than that which con-
cerns the *liberty* and *power* of the People,
in judging and trying the instructions, as-
sertions and decrees of their Teachers.
What *Luther* said of Justification, I may
say of this; it is *doctrina stantis & cadentis*
Ecclesie, of such influence upon the
welfare, life, and being of the Church,

A 2

that

that it cannot be secured without it. And yet there are few, if any, that have in our Language treated singly, and fully concerning it. I shall therefore, towards a supply of that defect, discourse a while upon it, and endeavour from *Scripture*-grounds, to evince and clear up the just extent and bounds thereof, that so Teachers may neither be affronted by their People, nor People oppressed by their Teachers, but both the one and the other may quietly enjoy the freedom and priviledge proper to their *sphere* and station. And in order thereunto shall, before I go any further, desire you to take notice, that there is a four-fold judgment in matters of Religion. 1. A judgment of supreme *legislation* and *decision*; which is peculiar unto God himself, the great Maker and Lord of the Universe, whose Prerogative it is, to give Laws unto the consciences of men, and prescribe the rule, matter, order and manner of his own Worship and Service, and to render unto every one according as he does more or less conform thereunto. 2. A judgment of civil *inspection* and *moderation*; and this pertains to the Magistrate, whose office it is, not only

only to protect the Church from the rage and violence of persecutors, but also to see that all Officers and Members thereof, do keep their respective places, and perform their several duties, that so Religion may flourish, and the work of God may go on and prosper. 3. A judgement of ministerial *direction* and *instruction*; which belongs unto the Pastors of the Church, who both as they sit in council, and also in the course of their ordinary ministry, are to assert and defend the truth, teach their people out of the *holy Scriptures* the good knowledge of God, admonish the scandalous, cast out the obstinate, and restore the penitent to their former communion and privileges. 4. A judgement of private *examination* and *discretion*; and this belongs to every individual Christian, who for the certain information of his own judgement, and the full satisfaction of his conscience, both may and ought to try by the Word, not only the doctrines of particular Pastors, but likewise the decrees of Councils, and so far as he finds them agreeable thereunto, he is to receive them, and so far as they are otherwise he is to reject them. It is the last of these that

falls under our present consideration; concerning which, Writers discourse variously, according as their principles and interests lead them.

1. The *Jewish Rabbi's*, as they labour under lamentable blindness and sottishness in other particulars, so they do in this; they are so far from allowing their people the liberty belonging to them, that they do most cruelly and unmercifully tyrannize over them, holding them in no less bondage than the severe *Egyptians* did their afflicted Ancestors in times past. Instead of permitting them the exercise of private, rational, self-directive *discretion*, which there is all the reason in the world they should allow them, they tie them up closely to their mouthes, strictly charging them to believe them, and that without the least hesitancy or scruple, let them say what they will. Nay, such is their pride and arrogance, that they will have them to reverence and observe all their doctrines and precepts, how absurd or strange soever they are, as if they were no less than so many rays and beams of divine light, darted down from the very face of God himself. Even in our *Saviour's* time they
were

were got to such height of spirit, that
(as the Scripture it self shews) they am-
bitiously affected the title of Rabbi, and
bound heavy burthens, and grievous to be Mat. 23,
born, and laid them upon mens shoulders. 4. 7.

And as if this were not sufficient, they
have since that time proceeded (in a way
proportionable to their defection from
God and his truth) to greater lordliness
and oppression. *R. Ahubab* saith, That Menoras
what ever they teach and speak in their my- Hammaor
stical and allegorical explications, the people R. 23. col. 1.
are bound no less firmly and certainly to be-
lieve them, quam legi Moses, than the
very law of Moses. And, That if they find
any thing that seems to them hyperbolical, or
quite contrary to nature, or too high for
their apprehensions, they must ascribe the
fault to their own defective understandings,
non autem verbis ipsorum, and not to their
words. And he likewise saith, that all their
words are the words of the living God; that
not one of them shall fall to the ground in
vain; that the people stand bound to believe
all things that are writ by them, or in their
name; that they must not in the least reflect
on them, either in word or thought; and
that he that does it shall not escape punish-
ment. Whereby it appears, that they

challenge an absolute, uncontrollable
 power over their people; that they re-
 quire them to shew the same respect to
 their Assertions, that they are to give to
 the Scriptures themselves; that if they
 deliver any thing that seems strange or
 harsh, they must not for all that offer to
 suspect them, or censure their Doctrine;
 and, that if they do it, they hold they
 shall be punished for it. And R. Selomoh
 Farchi writing upon those words of Mo-
 ses, *Thou shalt observe to do according to all
 that they shall inform thee*, thus glosses up-
 on them; *Thou must not decline from that
 which they shall tell thee, though they say, de
 manu tuâ dextrâ quod sinistra sit, et de
 manu sinistra quod dextra sit*; of the right
 hand that it is the left, and of the left, that
 it is the right. He looked upon their Au-
 thority over the people as such, that
 though they should speak things never
 so incredible and ridiculous, yet they
 might not either gainsay them, or with-
 hold their assent. Indeed one of his fel-
 lows who would seem milder than the
 rest, endeavours somewhat to mollifie the
 expression, but whiles he is doing it, ha-
 ving the same proud blood running in
 his own veins, he affirms little less him-
 self.

Auctor Ik-
 harim 1. 3.

Deut. 17.
 10.

self. For, saith he, If it happen that a private person know more than the wise men, and do better understand the Truth than some of them, yet the constitution of more ought to stand, *Neq; fas erit dissentire ab iis*, neither shall it be lawfull for him to dissent from them, so as to do any thing of his own opinion. In the judgement then of such amongst them, as pretend to greater soberness and moderation than the rest, a private man though never so far above them in abilities, may not dissent from them, let them say what they will, nor do any thing of his own opinion, though he have never so good reason for it, except they be pleased to allow of it. And Guil, Vorstius tells of their Rabbines that they hold that their decrees do, *non minori jure*, with no less right bind their peoples Consciences to obedience, than the Precepts of the written Law; that they must reverence them as they reverence God himself; that he who disputes against them contends with the Holy Spirit; that he who takes up a strife with them, is as he who takes up a strife against the holy Ghost; that he who thinks evilly of them, is as he who thinks evilly of the holy Spirit. And that they may the better deterr the people from either contemning

Not. in
Maim. de
fund. leg.
c. 6. p. 77.

Buxt. Synag. Jud.
c.1. p. 62.

Hoornb.
cont. Jud.
l.1.c.3. p.
99.

Guil. Vorstius ubi
sup. p. 76,
77.

Vid. Buxt.
Synag. Jud.
c.1. p. 65.

temning or violating their Precepts, they do, *anathematis fulmine ferire, excommunicate* such as they finde guilty thereof, nay they do *fustigare sine estimatione & numero*, beat them till they dye. If you desire more instances of this nature, turn to the Authors quoted in the Margent, and they will plentifully supply you. This you'l say is severe dealing, and such as can neither consist with the necessary liberty of Religion or reason; and yet such is the miserable blindness and slavery of their deluded people, that they readily submit to them. Luther in a Treatise which he wrote of the *authority and faithfulness* of the *Rabbi's* and their writings, informs us that the *Jews* say they ought to believe them, although (as you heard before) they affirm the *left hand is the right*, and the *right, the left*. And for proof hereof, he tells us of three *Jews* that being in his Company fell into discourse with him, and as often as he urged them with a Text of Scripture, so often they replied, *quod Rabbini ipsorum credere reverentur*, that they were bound to believe their *Rabbi's*; and that as for the Bible they were free from it. And thus do their *Rabbi's* and they most impiously and wretchedly combine

combine together to undo and ruine each other. For on the one hand, such is the height and imperiousness of the *Rabbi's* that they challenge an absolute Authority and Lordship over their poor peoples Faith and Consciences, so as to teach or require what they will, without being either contradicted or disobeyed. And on the other hand, such is the slavery and baseness of the people, that they prostitute themselves to the wills of their *Rabbi's*, suffering them quietly to exercise over them what power they please. And their *Rabbi's* having brought them to this pass, whither cannot they lead them? what may they not do with them? when the *Philistims* had bored out *Sampsons* Eyes, they lead him and did with him what they pleased. And after the same manner deal these proud Usurpers with their poor people: They first put out their eyes, by taking from them all liberty of private *discretion*, and having got them into that condition, they do at pleasure make a prey of them.

2. The same domination that the *Jewish Rabbi's* challenge and exercise over their people, the same the *Mahometan Muphtis* challenge and exercise over theirs.

theirs. They will by no means endure
 them to dispute any thing that is in-
 joyn'd them, but will have them to look
 upon their bare word as sufficient War-
 rant, for their Faith and practice. This
Mahomet himself laid a Foundation to;
 for being conscious of the weakness of
 the grounds he proceeded on, he strictly
 forbad all Expostulations, and Reasonings
 about the Religion he prescribed, decla-
 ring he would have it received without
 any *scruple* or *examination* whatsoever.
 This our Writers do every where make
 mention, and complain of, as a piece of
 highest insolency, usurpation, and tyran-
 ny. The learned *Grotius* in that excellent
 Book which he wrote in defence of *Chri-*
stianity, gives this account of his Religi-
 on, That it is wholly framed for shedding of
 blood; and that it challenges assent, *nullâ*
inquirendâ libertate, without any liberty at
all of enquiry. And *Amyrald* in a dis-
 course of the like nature speaks to the
 same purpose. *There is nothing* (saith he)
he hath so strictly forbidden as to dispute
concerning his Law. Nay, such (as Dr.
Sutcliffe shews out of *Zigabenus*) was his
 impatieney of contradiction that he com-
 manded his Vassals to destroy the *Chri-*
stians,

Azhar 13.
Ed. 1. lat. 1.

De verit.
l. 6. p. 303.

Treatise of
Relig. part
3. c. 3. p.
350.

Turtop. l. 1.
c. 6. p. 34.

stians, *Ubi sunt, in ipsos insiderint, where-*
soever they should light on them. And to
incourage them to the work, he told them
that it was meritorious, and such as should
be recompenced with ample reward. And
when some of his Disciples wondered he
should deliver such harsh Doctrine, he
answered, *Se non cum Spiritu, sed gladio*
venisse, that he came not with the Spirit
but the sword; and that therefore those were
to be destroyed that would not admit of his
Law. And answerable hereunto is that
which we have in *Vincentius Bellouacensis*,
who acquaints us how he caused an an-
cient man that was a Jew to be murdered,
Quod se ab eo reprehensum audivisset, for
that he heard he had said somewhat by way
of reproof of him. This is no other than
barbarous, nay beastly Tyranny, and yet
such is the reverence that his blinde Pro-
selytes bear to him and his *Alcoran*,
though a bundle of the grossest Non-
sense and Vanity, that ever impudent-
ly heaped up together, that they will
not hear talk of having any Questions or
Controversies raised about it, or any part
of it; but looking upon it as the genuine
and undoubted suggestions of the Angel
Gabriel, who they fondly imagine held
fami-

Specul. hist.
l. 23. c. 43.

familiar converse with him, close with it and observe it without any reasonings or Jealousies at all concerning it. Were it worth the while to turn to other Authors, I might multiply passages out of them to the same purpose; but these few I have here recited may serve to intimate to you what condition the *Mahometans* keep their people in, as to the business under debate. They are so far from allowing them a liberty of private examination (which yet their doctrine, of any other that layes claim to Scripture, or any part of it, should for the absurdity and folly that attends it, admit of) that they utterly decry and forbid it, nay persecute it with greatest rage and violence, presently taking away the lives of such as offer to raise the least doubts or scruples about it. And hereby it is (as *Voe-*
sin observes) that they uphold their *Empire*, and keep their people from *for-*
saking them, which they could never do, if they allowed them the free exercise of that *power* and *liberty* which belongs to them.

Disput. part
 2. de Mu-
 hammed.
 p. 668.

3. The same course that the *Jewish* *Rabbi's*, and *Mahometan* *Muphti's* take with their people, the same the *Papish* *Clergy*

Clergy take with theirs. Under colour of preventing popular oppositions and confusions, they deny them all power in matters of Religion save that of assent and obedience, telling them it belongs to the Church in her Representative to judge and determine what Doctrines are sound and what are not, what is to be done in the service of God, and what is not to be done; and that they are to stand wholly to her judgement; acquiesce in her sentence, and close with her Decrees how corrupt or unreasonable soever they may seem to be, without either contradiction or censure. They hold that their *Bishops and Priests* assembled in Council are the Church; and that they sit not there as *Doctors* to teach and perswade, but as *Priests* or Judges to appoint and establish; and that whatever they define and determine, ought to be believed and observed without any further examination or tryall, scruple or doubting. Nay they look upon their Authority and wisdom to be such that they hold it no less than presumption and impiety to call in question what is agreed upon and prescribed by them. That you may not think we fatter upon them those opinions they never

2. I. de verb.
l. 3. c. 10.
Col. 155.
imp. Paris.
1620.

never held (as they use to deal with us)
I shall shew you out of their own approved Authors what they teach in this matter. Bellarmine tells us that though Infidels and such as are out of the Church, may examine and try those things which are delivered by them that preach the Gospel to them, yet those who are within the Church, and understand the authority and priviledges of it, may not do it. Take his own words; they are in answer to our objection from the *Bereans*. Though Paul (saith he) was an Apostle, and could not preach false Doctrine, yet this appeared not in the beginning to the *Bereans*, neither stood they bound professedly to believe, untill they first saw Attinacles, or other probable reasons of believing; Therefore when Paul proved Christ to them out of the Oracles of the Prophets, they deservedly searched the Scriptures whether those things were so; but Christians who know that the Church cannot erre in explicating the Doctrine of Faith, tenentur eam recipere, & non dubitare an hac ita se habeant, stand bound to receive it, and not to doubt whether these things are so. So that in his judgement, as soon as a man comes to know the Church, and understand who are the

the Pastors of it, he must then question
 no further, but must stand to their judg-
 ments, and receive their dictates even in
 matters of faith, without either trial or
 doubting. Though he may enquire after
 the Church, and doubt till he know it,
 yet when he hath once found it, he must
 do so no more; he must then turn his
 trying and doubting into assenting and
 obeying. But *Bellarmino* is not herein
 alone; *Valentia* speaks to the same pur-
 pose. Then (saith he) *do we sufficiently un-
 derstand the spirit of the doctrine, when we
 perceive it to be propounded by the lawful
 Pastors of the Church, especially if a Council
 assent. Here, whosoever does not acquiesce,
 but going further arrogates to himself judg-
 ment over his Judges, and questions whe-
 ther those things are truths, which are de-
 fined by such as are set over us in the Church,
 by whom the holy Ghost would have us to be
 taught: non exequitur sed transgreditur su-
 perbe ac contumaciter, he does not observe,
 but proudly and contumaciously transgress
 the method of proving spiritt prescribed by
 the divine Law. Whereby you see he
 looks upon the power of judging as pe-
 culiar to the Pastors of the Church, in
 whose sentence he will have us to ac-
 quiesce,*

*Aaal. tit.
 Cath. l. 8. c.
 7. p. 90.*

Co'loq. Ratisb. sess. 9.
p. 280.

Jer. 2. 12.

Psal. 115.
5.

quiesce, and from which he thinks it is so far from being lawful to depart, as that he teaches, we may not without guilt of vain and sinful arrogancy so much as take upon us to call it in question, or pass censure upon it. This indeed is high and stately doctrine, and yet as if this were not sufficiently correspondent and uniform to the *Roman* pride and greatness, *Tannerus* goes further, and tells us, that the people are so far under the government of their superiours, that *if they erre in defining of any doubt, vitalis regimini errare possunt, imo debent; They may by virtue of the said government erre with them, nay, they ought to do it.* Upon the recital whereof, I may well break forth into the Prophet's pathological exclamation, and say, *Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this!* How sad is it that ever Christian tongue should utter such absurd and poisonous doctrine! What sons of meekness and tenderness do these men sometimes seem to be, and yet what slaves and vassals would they make of the people? though they have rational powers and discerning senses, yet they must not use them. The gods of the Heathens have eyes and *cannot* see, ears and *cannot* hear, mouthes and *cannot* speak:

speak: but its far otherwise with them; they have eyes and *must* not see, ears and *must* not hear, mouthes and *must* not speak, but must acquiesce in the judgment and sentence of their Masters, without enquiring or busying themselves any further. Though a silly *Ass* may in some cases reply upon her Master, rebuke and condemn him, yet may not they in any case reply upon them, or in the least call in question what is taught, imposed or done by them, but must stoop down under the burden that is laid upon them, without any exceptions or debates whatsoever. And such as is the doctrine of these men, such is their proof. The holy Ghost in the History of God's dealing with *Job*, saith, *The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding besides them*; from whence, for want of better evidence, they infer, that there are two sorts of persons in the Church, *Majores* and *Minores*; that is to say, the *Clergy* and the *Laity*; and that the latter, in matters to be believed, are to depend upon the former. According to which rate of arguing, I know no party ingaged in a cause so desperate, that may not even from Scripture furnish themselves with sufficient strength.

2 Pet. 2.

16.

Job 1. 14.

Aquin. 22.

q. 2. a 6.

If this kind of reasoning may be allowed,
I see not but the Curate, following the
vulgar Latin, might from that of *Jeremy*,
Jer. 17. 18. *Paveant illi, & non paveam ego*, fairly
enough infer, that the *Parishioners* were
to *pave* the *Chancel*, and not *he*.

4. Notwithstanding the harshness of
this doctrine, against the peoples judgment
of private *discretion*, and the ridiculous-
ness of the proof alledged for it, yet
are there some even amongst us, and such
too as would be thought to be none of
the worst Protestants, who stand up for
it and urge it. The Bishop of *Edinburgh*
determins, that *where a man hath not a*
Law, his own judgment is the rule of his
Conscience; but where there is a Law, the
Law must be the rule. Wherein he asserts
these two errors; the one is, that men may
make *Laws*, and bind burdens where
Christ hath not done it; which as it is
contrary to Protestant doctrine, so it is
inconsistent with, and destructive of our
Christian liberty. The other is, That the
Laws of men do preponderate and super-
sede the authority of conscience, so that
we must not appeal from them to it, but
from it to them, which amounts to no
less than plain blasphemy, and leads to

Epist. to
the Parsons
of the
Church of
Scotland.

Confess. Ba-
sil. art. 10.
p. 137.
Chamier.
Parist. t. 3.
l. 15. c. 8.
sect. 6. p.
25.

no other than down right atheism. True Religion teaches, that *all flesh must be silent before the Lord*; that the conscience is God's Vice-gerent, deputed by him to rule in the soul, and that the dictates thereof are sacred and inviolable; but this man hath found out other kind of doctrine: he will have the authority of humane Laws to be superiour to that of conscience, and that the former is not to stoop unto the latter, but the latter unto the former; which indeed is a good device to propagate *Heathenism, Turcism*, and such like prevailing impostures, but not true piety and holiness, which though sometimes they have *Kings for nursing fathers, and Queens for nursing mothers* to them, yet for the most part they have the powers and laws of the earth against them. Notwithstanding the Archbishop of St. Andrews steers his course the same way, and tells us, that *in things indifferent, we must always esteem that to be best, and most seemly, which seemeth so in the eye of publick authority*; neither is it for private men to control publick judgment. As they cannot make publick constitutions, so they may not control nor disobey them, being once made. Indeed authority ought to lock well

Isa 49. 23.

Sermon at
Perth As-
sembly.

to this, that it prescribe nothing but rightly,
appoint no rites nor orders in the Church,
but such as may set forward godliness and
piety. Yet put the case that some be otherwise
established, they must be obeyed by such as
are members of that Church, as long as they
have the force of a constitution, &c. But
thou wilt say, My conscience suffers me not
to obey, for I am persuaded that such things
are not right, nor appointed; I answer thee,
in matters of this nature and quality, the
sentence of thy superiours ought to direct thee,
and that is sufficient ground to thy conscience
for obeying. In things then of indifferency,
whether we have eyes or no, we must
make no use of them, but must see with
those of authority. We must not, like
creatures that have reason, weigh things
in the ballance of our own judgments, but
like such as are utterly destitute of it, take
them upon the recommendation of such
as are over us. And if (which is no un-
usual thing) it fall out, that they either
through ignorance, partiality, prejudice,
or the like, appoint such orders, as are
not onely against conscience, (which
through mis-information may erre) but
likewise the holy *Scriptures*, yet we must
obey, satisfiying our selves with this, that

it is authority that does enjoin them. This, one would think, were doctrine too gross, to gain advocates in a place of such light as *England* is; and yet Dr. *Covel* and Dr. *Burges* own it, and plead for it: they say, *The precept of the superiour binds more than the conscience of the inferiour can; and that the subject having the command of the King or Bishop for his warrant, ought not to examine, but onely to perform what he seeth commanded.* From hence you may learn how much these men esteem of the precepts of superiours, and how little of the dictates of conscience, though never so well instructed and informed. In those things wherein the authority of superiours does not interpose it self, by determining, commanding, forbidding, or such like acts, it hath some power; but in those things wherein it does interpose, it hath none at all, but must silently acquiesce. If superiours say, that light is darkness, or darkness is light; that good is evil, or evil is good; we must, though conscience tell us quite otherwise, assent and believe. If they forbid us to do what conscience saith, God hath commanded, or command us to do what Conscience saith, he hath forbidden, we must with-

See Dr.
Ames
Fresh suit,
p. 1. c. 7.
p. 79.

out the least scruple or reluctancy obey them, looking upon this as sufficient warrant to us, that what we omit or do is by their appointment. And what religion, faith, worship, or course of life is so bad, that this doctrine, if reduced to practice, will not lead a man to? nay, to maintain such kind of doctrine, what is it less than to justify all the cruelty and wickedness that hath been done at the appointment of higher powers, whether Civil or Ecclesiastical, ever since they had an existence in the world? Nay, what is it but to condemn the *generation of the just*, and throw dirt in the face of the blessed Martyrs, and faithful servants of God in all ages, who out of the entire zeal they have born to him, and the respect they have had to their own consciences, have still, as occasion hath been offered, withstood the unjust commands of the Rulers under whom they have lived, and denied their obedience to them? For those I here deal with, to pretend they give this power to Rulers only in things indifferent and lawful, does (as a good Author shews) avail little, whiles in the mean time they make them the sole Judges of what is indifferent and what is not indifferent,

different, of what is lawful and what is not lawful. What difference (as to consequence) is there betwixt saying, Rulers may enjoin us to worship an Idol, and it belongs onely to Rulers to judge what is an Idol? none at all. The same doctrine that teaches it belongs onely to Rulers to judge what is indifferent and what is not indifferent, what is lawful and what is not lawful, and that we are bound to stand to their appointment; teaches in effect, that if they enjoin us to worship an Idol, we must do it. And therefore it is sad, that men who pretend respect to the *Protestant* interest, should allow of, much more that they should broach doctrine of such ill influence and tendency. But they are not without their followers. How ordinary is it at this day for men in all companies and places we fall into, as soon as ever we begin to speak of matters of Religion, especially those which concern Worship and Discipline, presently to refer us to the Church, and tell us, that the Church requires and forbids us to do so and so, and to ask who must be Judge, you or the Church; and what, will you be wiser than the Church, and will you not obey the Church? And such is their
blind

blind zeal, that though this be all the strength they have to urge, yet if we will not thereupon comply with them, they forthwith exclaim against us, as proud, wilfull, schismatical, seditious, nay represent and reproach us as people unworthy to live. This is so common, that I believe there are few that read these lines, but they know what I say to be truth. Now what unreasonable dealing is this, how contrary to the Scriptures, and unsuitable to the Religion we do profess? That in *Italy*, *Spain*, and such like places where *Antichrist* bears sway, they should make such language the keeping of their Song, is not much to be marvel'd at, but that the people of *England*, which God hath made a *Tabor* of Gospel light and glory, should be guilty of so much folly and baseness, is a thing more remarkable, and such, as if Providence prevent not, may prove a business of very bad consequence. It's to be feared, that those amongst us who so zealously cry up implicit Faith, and Obedience to our own Church, will if the scales turn do it to another. I speak not this to detract in the least from the just Authority of the Church, or to diminish

minish either the reverence or obedience belonging to her, but to obviate the foolish, vain, servile disposition of some, who think they cannot sufficiently evidence themselves to be true Sons of the Church, unless they ascribe to her such a transcendent, magisterial, uncontrollable power as *Jesus Christ* never invested her with. As men should take care that they withhold not from her any respect that *Jesus Christ* hath appointed them to give her, so they should likewise take care, that they give her no more than what he hath allowed her. The same *Apostle* that commands us to *obey them that have the rule over us*, forbids us to *think of men above that which is written*. We must neither so honour God as to withhold or diminish the respect due to men, nor so respect men, as to withhold or diminish the honour due to God, but following the advice of our *Saviour*, we must *give unto God the things that are Gods, and unto Men the things that are mens*. But,

Heb. 13.

17.

1 Cor. 4.6.

Mat. 23.

21.

5. All *Orthodox, Protestant* Writers who adhere to the *Scripture*, and are sincere to the reformed Interest, deliver other kinde of Doctrine, teaching that the

the people are not such Idiots as those before mentioned would make them, nor so little concern'd in the business of Religion, but that they have belonging to them a Judgement of private *discretion*, by virtue whereof they have power of examining and trying whatever is propounded to them by their Leaders for their instruction, edification or use. As they allow unto Magistrates a judgement of *civil inspection*, by virtue whereof they ought to see that all things in the Church be done *decently and in order*; and unto Pastors a Judgement of *ministerial direction*, by virtue whereof they may meet together, debate and decree such things as are conducing to the more acceptable, and successfull carrying on of the work of Christ, so (because both Magistrates and Ministers are but subordinate Judges, bound up to the sentence of God set down in his Word, from which it is possible they may erre) they allow unto all Christians a Judgement of *private discretion*, by virtue whereof they not only may, but ought (as they tender their own safety) to bring the Constitutions and Decrees of such as are over them to the common Rule, and try

try them thereby, e're they close with
 them. To this purpose writes *Luther*. Oper. 2. 2. p. 375.
The sheep (saith he) ought to judge, *utrum*
Prelati vocem Christi, vel alienorum propo-
nant, whether the Prelates speak the voice
of Christ or of Strangers. And, that *As-*
sembly, in which the voice of the Gospel
sounds, hath not only power and command-
ment of judging of every Opinion, but even
every pious man ought to do it, and that
sub periculo salutis, under the peril of sal-
vation. He did not only think that
 Churches taken conjunctly had power of
 judging the Doctrines of their respective
 Prelates and Pastors, but likewise that
 every private Christian had power to do
 it, nay stood bound to do it, and that
 under the highest penalty, even the for-
 feiture of Salvation. And with him agree
 multitudes more of the most learned, or-
 thodox and holy men that ever engaged
 in the defence of the Protestant cause.
 It concerns all the godly (saith Dr. Whit-
 ker) that they take heed to themselves, et
quamvis doctrinam diligenter examinant,
 and diligently examine every Doctrine, lest
 they close with those things that are false
 for those which are true. And, every man
 ought to lean upon his own Faith, and de-
 pend

Part 1.
 cont. 1. q. 1.
 c. 8. p. 359.

*Thef. Salm.
de sum. jud.
sect. 48. p.
110.*

pend upon his own judgement, non ex cu-
jusquam hominis nutu, atq; arbitrio, not
the suggestion and arbitrement of any men
whatsoever. And, unusquisque sibi iudex
esse debet, every one ought to judge for him-
self. The common Question that still
occurs in all our debates, and which
ever and anon we are put to answer, is
who must be judge? Why, here you have
a clear and peremptory solution; Every
man must judge for himself. Though
private men may not ascend either into
the Magistrates Throne, or into the Mi-
nisters Chair, so as authoritatively to
judge or give sentence for others, yet
they may and ought to do it for them-
selves. To the same purpose speaks Cap-
pellus: It is (saith he) verily lawfull, and
ever will be lawfull, unicuique, fideli, for eve-
ry of the faithfull by a tacit sense of the
minde and internal Judgement, to see and
judge whether the sentence given in Eccle-
siastical Judicatories be just, and uttered ac-
cording to the Law of God, or whether it
be given contrary, besides, or against the
Scripture. The Law of God is the cyno-
sure which not only single persons, but
whole Synods, how wise, grave, pious,
or eminent soever they are, must have
their

their eye upon, and steer their course by ; and when they have made decrees, private men must take them under tryall, and see whether they have kept to it, or not ; if they have, then they must observe and follow them, if otherwise, they must forsake and leave them, choosing rather to possess and enjoy the Truth with a few, nay alone, than to lye under the evil of Error and Deception, with the greatest multitudes. To these, that I may not weary you with testimonies in so plain a case, I shall only add somewhat of that which the Author a little before mentioned hath said on this subject ; who hath in a few words spoken the design and scope of the following Discourse. *If (saith he) it be said, that men are bound to be ruled by their Governours in determining what things are lawfull, and what not ; to this it is answered : First, no true Protestant can swear blinde obedience to Church Governours in all things. It is the highest usurpation to rob men of the liberty of their judgements. That which we plead for against the Papists, is, that all men have eyes in their heads as well as the Pope ; that every one hath a judicium privata discretionis, which is the rule of practice*

Mr. Still-
lingst. Iren.
p. 118,
119.

as to himself; and though we freely allow a Ministerial power under Christ in the government of the Church, yet that extends not to an obligation upon men to go against the dictates of their own Reason and Conscience. Their power is only directive and declarative, and in matters of duty can binde no more than Reason and evidence brought from Scripture by them, doth. — The plea of an Erroneous Conscience takes not off the Obligation to follow the dictates of it; for as a man is bound to lay it down supposing it erroneous, so he is bound not to go against it, while it is not layd down. Again, if men, are bound to submit to Governours in the determination of lawfull things, what plea could our Reformers have to withdraw themselves from the Popes Toak. — Let men turn and winde themselves which way they will, by the very same arguments that any will prove separation from the Church of Rome lawfull, because she required unlawfull things, as conditions of her communion, it will be proved lawfull not to conform to any suspected or unlawfull praëctice, required by any Church-governours upon the same terms, if the thing so required be after serious and sober enquiry judged unwarrantable

vantable by a mans own Conscience. In his
Judgement then, men are not to subject
themselves to their Governours in all
things they please to determine and ap-
point, but to consult their own Con-
sciences, and follow the dictates there-
of, which he looks upon as a point so
essential to true Religion, that he takes
him to be no true Protestant that do's
renounce it; and withall declares it to
be the highest usurpation that Gover-
nours can be guilty of, to deny their
people liberty of it. And yet he observes
there are some even amongst our selves
that think they have no liberty of this
nature; against whom he alledges the ex-
ample of our worthy Reformers, whose
withdrawing from the Church of Rome
cannot be justified, unless such a liberty
be acknowledged. If you would yet
further see what our Writers say con-
cerning this matter, you may consult
their discourses against the Papists *de in-
terpretatione Scripturae, fide implicita, voto
obedientia*, and such like subjects.

And thus I have given you some ac-
count of the different apprehensions of
men touching the present case, whereby
you see that such as are the enemies of the
(b) Truth,

Truth, and be addicted to domination and oppression, are altogether impatient of the peoples having any judgement of private *discretion*, nay reproach and persecute it, as a thing intollerable, and not to be endured. But the more wise, orthodox and sober party are wholly for it, as an undoubted right, settled upon them by Christ himself, which none may take from them without manifest injury both to him and them. Now because the opinions and resolutions of men, are no authentick determination of the matter, I shall therefore have recourse to the *Scripture*, wherein the Holy Ghost hath set down the liberty and power both of Ministers, and People, and distinguished their severall Rights and Priviledges; and in particular I shall insist upon those words of *Paul*, *Prove all things*; from whence I shall endeavour to evince against the forementioned enemies of the Truth, but more especially the *Papists* and such amongst us as comply with them, that though the people have not publick power of judging for others, as Ministers have, yet they have a private power of judging for themselves, which none ought to withhold or deny them the exercise of.

But

3d) But that you may not think that what
Is alledge in the following discourse in
behalf of the peoples judgement of pri-
vate discretion do's only extend unto, and
concern what is delivered by their Teach-
ers, I know that the same arguments that
serve to prove a liberty in them of judg-
ing the Doctrines of their Teachers,
serve likewise (*mutatis mutandis*) to prove
a liberty in them of judging the Com-
mands of the Civil Powers under whom
they live. As the authority of the for-
mer is subordinate and limited, so is that
of the latter, and as the former are sub-
ject to errors and mistakes, so likewise
are the latter, and therefore as the peo-
ple in defence and pursuance of their own
safety, are to judge of the Doctrines of
the one, so they are also to judge of the
Commands of the other. Though the
Powers over them be never so lawfull,
wise, great, yet in matters of Religion
they must not rest upon their judge-
ments, nor take what they deliver upon
trust, but must bring it to the Word,
and with all boldness and freedom exa-
mine it thereby, esteeming of it accor-
ding as they finde it more or less agree-
able therunto. This kinde of doctrine

I know the fawning Parasites of the times (that care not how high they ascend in extolling the power of Rulers, so they may but insinuate themselves in to favour, and drive on their own private interests) will look upon as little better than fanatical and seditious; but I hope all true Protestants have other kinde of apprehensions of it. I am sure it is such doctrine as the faithfull servants of God (who were as great haters of disloyalty as any of those unworthy flatterers that at this day declaim the most against it) have in all Ages constantly both maintain'd and practised. Herein let the reverend and learned Davenant serve for a witness. Subjects (saith he) ought not, neither may they, judge of the decrees of Superiours, *judicio auctoritatis*, by a judgement of authority, but they both may and ought to judge of the same, so far as concerns themselves, *judicio discretionis*, by a judgement of discretion. And (saith he) this is confirmed *omnium plorum exemplo*, by the example of all the godly, and he instances in Daniel, the Apostles, and the Martyrs in Q. Maries dayes, who, he tells us, rightly judged that they ought not to believe those things which were propounded

Praelection.
in Coloss.

3. 23. p.
255.

pounded to them to be believ'd; nor do
those things which were commanded to be
done. And the truth is, the liberty and
exercise of such judgement is of such use
to the directing of the people in their
duty, that it must needs be acknowledged
not only to be lawfull, but indispens-
ably necessary. For if Rulers, the sub-
ject to mistake, and so enjoy unlawful
things, and people when they do it, must
(as all confess that are not thorough
Atheists) disobey them, they must neces-
sarily have liberty so judge of what
nature that is which they do not obey
them. For how is it possible, they should
be able to distinguish between lawfull
and unlawfull, close with the one and
avoyd the other, except they be allowed
the use of their own discretion to advise
and direct them in it. Suppose Rulers do
with *Nebuchadnezzar* command them
one while to worship God, another while,
an Image, how shall they do to know they
must obey them in the one, and not in
the other, unless they may have liberty to
take both to the Rule, and try them
thereby. Upon which and such like
grounds, I believe there is scarcely any
Prince in the World truly pious, but he is

Dan. 3. 5.
19.

Dan. 3. 28.

content with all his heart to allow his people such liberty. *Nebuchadnezzar* though an *Heathen Monarch*, after he had duly weigh'd things, was so far from being displeased with *Sadrach, Meshech, and Abednego*, for either censuring or disobeying his decree (though done in the face of his whole Empire) that he himself *bliss* God upon that account, and commends them for it.

To conclude, you understand, Sirs, the present state and condition wherein we are. The skies you see gather blackness round about, and look angrily upon us on every side. The cloud that a while ago was but the bigness of a *man's hand*, hath now overspread the whole face of the heavens, and armed them with vengeance against us. As if all those fore Judgements God hath of late years inflicted upon us were too small a scourge for the chastening of such a wicked and provoking people. He now threatens us with the invasion of *Portugall Powers*, which how far they may prevail, and what violence and severity they may exercise both upon the outward and the inward man, he only knows. Many prudent, holy men who as the Scripture it self shews,

are

are the fittest of all other to be consulted in a case of this nature) having diligently observed and considered the aspect and motion of the Starrs ingaged in the present Conjunction, do presage from them great and sore tryalls. It concerns you therefore to awake out of sleep, run to the Tower of David, and there arm your selves with spiritual armour from top to toe, that so you may be able to hold out against the sharp assaults wherewith you are like to be exercised. However God is pleased to deal with you, be sure you preserve your Consciences inviolate and pure, suffering neither force, nor flatteries to ravish or defile them. And in order thereunto, remember that you keep close unto the Word of God as it is contained in the holy Scriptures, constantly assert and maintain the authority, sufficiency, perspicuity and other excellencies belonging to it, and (in compliance with the design of this discourse) examine and try all matters of Religion thereby. *Epist. Arrian.* tells us that the greatest and first work of a Philosopher is *δοκιμαζειν τὰς φαντασίας, καὶ διακρίνειν, καὶ ἰσχυρῶς ὑποστηρίζειν ἀποφασίζοντα*, to examine and try what is before him, and so admit nothing without proof. And the like I may say of every

Gen. 18.

17.

Prov. 25.

14.

Psal. 22.3.

Hos. 14.9.

Mic. 6.9.

Eph. 6.13.

I. I. C. 20.

79.

ry Christian; One of his first and greatest works, in order to his necessary instruction, and the building of him up in Faith and Holiness, is to bring all those things he hath to do with in the business of Religion to the Word, and examine them thereby, taking diligent care that he receive nothing till he have first made tryal of it. Nay, if it be the duty of a Philosopher to be thus cautious in his undertakings, it is much more the duty of a Christian to be so in his; by how much the undertakings of the one are of greater concernment than those of the other, by so much it behoves the latter to be more cautious than the former. What's the reason wherefore so many are upon all occasions seduced and lead aside? It is because they take not this course; it is because they receive things upon trust, and venture on them before they have by due tryall found out what they are. The reason wherefore men embrace so many unsound Doctrines, and betake themselves to such wilde, impious, pernicious practices, is because they do not sit in judgement upon them, and make proof of them; but following the irregular motions of their own misguided inclinations, give up them-

themselves e're they understand what
 they do. What was the reason that so
 many followed such silly Creatures as
Thendras, Judas of Galilee, and the like Se- Acts 5. 36,
 ducers? It was because they did not take 37.
 them to the Touch-stone of the Word,
 which would soon have shew'd they were
 but counterfeit Coyn, and not what they
 pretended to be. What's the reason that
 so many fall in with *Heathenish, Popish*
 wayes, but because they neglect to bring
 them to the Scripture, which would teach
 them better? And indeed its just with
 God, if, when he hath given men light to
 walk by, they will not make use of it,
 but still follow the bent of their own
 hearts; to deliver them up to Impostures
 and delusions, as the just recompense of
 their folly and wilfulness. And if we look
 into the method of his proceedings, as
 they are set down in his Word, we shall
 finde, he frequently do's do it. Thus he
 dealt with the *Heathens*; when they did
 not like to retain him in their knowledge, he
 gave them over *ἐς ἀδόκιμον νῦν*, which our
 Translation renders *a reprobate minde*, but
 it properly signifies a minde void of Judg-
 ment, that is disabled from examining of
 things; such as *Nebuchadnezzars* was,
 when

Rom. 1. 28.

Dan. 4. 34. when God had taken his *understanding*
 from him. Behold here the *goodness* and
severity of God's *goodness*, in offering the
 knowledge of himself to them; *severity*
 in punishing them thus for the contempt
 of it. Because they employed not their
 mindes in the search and study of the
 Truth, but like ungratefull wretches,
 despised and made light of it, therefore
 he smote them as he did the men of So-
 dom, with blindness, leaving them to
 grope for that way which otherwise they
 might have had eyes to have seen. Thus
 likewise he deals with the *Jews*; he blind-
 ed their eyes, and hardened their hearts, that
 they should not see with their eyes, nor under-
 stand with their heart. They were a people
 exceeding dear to him, inasmuch that he
 favoured and priviledged them above all
 people in the World. He instructed them
 with his holy Oracles, and the great things
 of his Law, with the various advantages
 attending thereon, which had they faith-
 fully improved, they might have enjoyed
 to this day; but they made light of them,
 trampled them under foot, and profaned
 them. And what is the issue of it? why,
 in just indignation he rears them away
 from them, and shuts them up in dark-
 ness;

ness; since which time they have been
the most foolish, sottish people in the
World. And after the same manner he
deals with those that live under the Rule
of Antichrist; because they receive not the
Truth (offered to them) in the love of it,
therefore he sends them strong delusions,
giving them up to believe lyes. He hath
by his good providence vouchsafed them
his Word to be a Rule and Directory to
them; and hath charged them to keep
close to it as the best Guide they can
possibly follow; but they have neglected
and forsaken it, and therefore he hath
given them up to believe *Monkish* Tra-
ditions, and *childish* fables, whereby their
Teachers do lamentably beguile them,
and lead them into perdition. From these
instances it appears what a dangerous
thing it is for any people, how dear so-
ever they are to God, to neglect his
Word; he do's no less than expose them
to the danger of dereliction, and ruine.
As therefore you desire to enjoy his fa-
vour; and the continuance of the means
of grace wherewith he hath blessed you,
prize it at an high rate, be diligent in the
study of it; and try all by it, choosing
rather to undergo all the hardship and
misery

2 Thess. 2.
10, 11.

misery imaginable, than to swerve in the least from it.

Zinch. vol.
3. t. 8. p.
305.

Grindal, Bishop of London, and afterwards of York, writing to Zanchy, tells him, *It is the property of a true Teacher to be tenacious of that faithfull Word, which is profitable for Doctrine, atq; à veritate ne latum quidem unguem discedere, and not to depart an hairs breadth from it.* A good lesson for the *Adiaphorists* and *Latitudinarians* of our present times, who think if they can but secure the Foundation, they need not trouble themselves about lesser matters. Beware how you comply with such, or joyn with them in their sinfull practices. As it is the duty of Teachers to be tenacious of the Word, so it is your duty likewise, and therefore see that you keep close to it, suffering your selves by no means to be drawn from it. Though you be tempted with smiles and frowns, promises and threatnings, rewards and punishments, yet be not moved, do not forsake it, but stoutly and constantly persist in the defence of it. Make it to appear that you have higher spirits, and nobler principles than natural generation could help you to; that you can trample upon the pride and glory of the World, and look
Prisons,

Prisons, Gibbets, and Flames in the face.
Let *Atheists* and *Papists* see you have such
a God, and such a Religion, as you take
to be worth the suffering for; that *Eng-
land* spent not all her Martyrs at once;
that by a mystical and happy transanima-
tion, the souls of those deceased Worthies,
who sacrificed their lives in the witness
of the Truth many years ago, do live in
you; and that notwithstanding all the
slaughters which *Antichrist* that ravenous
and insatiable Wölfe, hath made among
the Saints in these Nations, and the de-
testable Neutrality of the present age,
wherein we live, there are yet those who
(if the Truth need further testimony)
can finde in their hearts to part with their
Liberties, Estates, Lives, and all that is
near and dear unto them, in the behalf of
it. Be not dismayed with any of those
things that may befall you. Though you
see the wayes of God (like the waters of
Dimon) running down *with blood*, yet be Isa. 15. 9.
not moved, but stand your ground, and
remain faithfull. Think it not below you
to go to Heaven the same way that your
dear Lord hath done before you. Be wil-
ling not only to conform to him in his
works, but also in his sufferings. You
have

have many a time with delight read of
the patience, cheerfulness, and constancy
of the faithfull Servants of God in for-
mer times; let your carriage in your
approaching tryalls be such, that those
who shall come after you, may have oc-
casion with the like delight to read of
yours. Leaving these things to your se-
rious consideration, I shall close with that
saying wherewith Dr. Holland used to
take leave of his Friends, *Commendo vos
amari Dei, & odio Papismi: I commend
you to the love of God, and the hatred of
Papery.*

ERRATA

1. The first of these is the fact that the

海 山 記

[illegible]

22 11 1

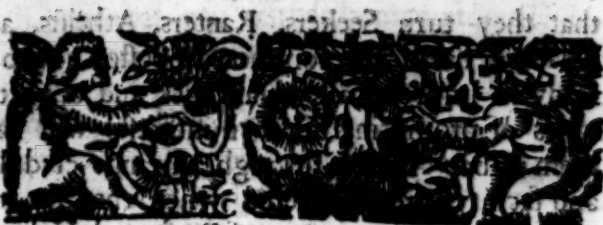
ERRATA, in the Margent.

Page 7, and 10. for t. 3. r. t. 1. p. 14. for *Iust.*
r. *Hist.* p. 19. for *Luk.* r. *Luc.* p. 90. for p. 166.
r. col. 410.

In the Book,

Page 14. l. 28. for *Scriptures* r. *Scripture*, p. 38.
l. 15. for *pretatum* r. *prælatum*, p. 44. l. 20. in some
Copies, for *perfecta existent* r. *profec̃ta exstent*, and l.
22. for *Edefus* r. *Edefius*, p. 68. l. 12. for 13 r. 14.
p. 80. l. 27. for *equi* r. *equi*, p. 91. l. 16. add it.

I T H E S S.



1 Thess. 5. 21.

Prove all things.

IN the preceding Verse the Apostle dissuades the *Thessalonians* from *despising* of *prophecies*. For the better understanding whereof, you are to note, that in the Church of *Thessalonica* there were two sorts of persons, both of which laboured under an unhappy extreme, as to the preaching of the Word, here called *prophecy*. The one through the unskillfulness, and vanity of some in preaching, took up such a prejudice against it, that they despised all preaching. The other being acted by an indiscreet, misguided zeal, were so far from despising all preaching, that without any discrimination or exception, they allowed and embraced all. We have sufficient exemplifications hereof amongst our selves; divers from the insufficiency, and scandalousness of some that are employed in preaching, take up such a prejudice against it,
B that

that they turn Seekers, Ranters, Atheists, and whatever else the common Infidel (who is ready to take all advantages and opportunities of promoting his own interest) will have them to be. Some through a strange credulity and facility are affected when they see men make specious pretences of Piety and Holiness, and hear them deliver things in the Name of God, with seeming zeal and affection, that they presently conclude whatever they deliver is sound and good, and worthy their approbation and acceptance. And thus, as the former through a rash and obstinate prejudice turn their backs upon the common means of Salvation, so these through an inconsiderate and preposterous affection turn themselves into miserable deluders. Thus, as among the *Thessalonians*, some out of prejudice, others through zeal, some refused to preach, others liked all. Now being aware of these sad Exorbitancies and Confusions, endeavours to reduce and settle them in a mean betwixt these two extremes. He would neither have them to like all, nor dislike all, neither receive all, nor reject all, but to *probe* all, and then receive what was good, and reject what was bad. The words imply as much as if he had said, My Brethren, I see you are variously affected towards preaching: some out of prejudice undervalue it, others out of zeal overvalue it; some so despise it that they will receive nothing, others so affect it that they will receive any thing. Now there is danger in both these; the one leads to Atheism, the other to Error: let it be your care therefore to avoid both

(3)
both. See that you neither contemptuously de-
spise all, nor credulously receive all, but like
prudent and sober Christians, bring all to the
common Standard of the Word, prove it there-
by, and what you find contrary to it, that with-
stand and reject, and what you finde agreeable
to it, that allow and follow.

Having thus briefly given you an account of
the occasion of the Words, I shall, as the gene-
ral thesis I intend to insist on, and make out to
you, raise from them this Observation :

*That it is the duty of Christians to prove all those
things, which in the dispensation of the Gospel
are delivered to them.*

Doct.

Though it be reasonable, that they should re-
ceive the Ministers of Christ, and entertain them
with respect answerable to the authority they
are sent by, and the nature of the Message they
bring along with them, yet they must not look
upon them as infallible, but as subject to errors
and mistakes, and therefore must hear them with
judgement and caution. Though they be ne-
ver so able, pious, conscientious, usefull in the
Church, dear to them, yet they must not take
what they deliver upon their credit, or autho-
rity, but must bring it to the Word, and make
proof of it thereby. This course God hath pre-
scribed as the means both of their satisfaction
and safety, and therefore they must neither upon
one account nor other neglect it, but with all
care and faithfulness close with it and fol-
low it.

Perk.
Abolh.
cap. 5.

The *Jewish* Writers tell us, there sate at the feet of their *Rabbi's* four sorts of Hearers; some of which had *conditionem Spongiae*, others *Clepsydra*, others *sacci facinacei*, and others *Cribri*. Some were like to a *Sponge* sucking in all they heard, without any discretion or distinction: Others were like the *Hour-glass*, letting out at one ear, what they took in at the other; others were like the *Wine-sack* letting out the Wine, and keeping in the dreggs. And others were like the *ricing sieve*, letting out the courser seed, and keeping in the Corn. Of which four sorts the last is only to be approved of; for we must neither receive all, nor let go all, neither retain that which is bad, nor let go that which is good, but judging all, we must retain that which is good, and let go that which is bad, which is the very thing the Apostle aims at here, when he saith, *prove all things*.

For the more methodical prosecuting of this point, I shall branch it forth into several particulars; which I shall explicate and discuss by themselves; and I shall shew,

I. What is meant by *proving*. The Scripture mentions two kinds of *proving*, the one belonging to God as the Efficient, the other unto man. It is only the latter of them that I have now to deal with; and of it we have three sorts. 1. Such as imports the *demonstration*, or *confirmation* of a matter in question. And this kind of proving *Paul* used when he shewed by the Scriptures that *Jesus was Christ*. Though he were an Apostle, a man of rare abilities, and singular faithfulness, yet he thought it not sufficient barely

Acts 18.28

barely to assert the authority of Christ, but he betakes himself to the Scripture, and from thence he fetches arguments whereby he clearly and unanswerably proves him to be the Messias.

2. Such as imports *approbation* and *allowance*. And this kinde of proving *Paul* would have the *Corinthians* to use in the choice of the Messengers, whom they were to intrust with the carriage of the Contributions, which they were to make towards the relief of their distressed Brethren at *Jerusalem*. That they might not throw away by their indiscretion, what they gathered by their Charity, he wills them to deliver it into the hands of such as upon mature consideration, they should approve of, as fit for the undertaking and management of such a Charge. But it is not either of these kindes of proving that he means when he injoynts the *Thessalonians* to *prove all things*; for as he never intended to put them upon the making good of all things delivered to them, so neither was it his minde that they should approve or allow of them, but that they should upon a fair and equal weighing of them, have liberty to take what was good, and leave what was bad.

3. Such as imports *examination* and *tryall*. And this kind of proving it is that *Paul* means, when he saith, *prove all things*. He would not have men to blindfold or hoodwinck themselves, or sit down under a lazy, implicit Faith, closing with things meerly upon the credit of their Leaders, but to make use of their eyes, and by due proof satisfie themselves of the lawfulness of them before they entertain them. The word in the original is *δοκιμαζετε*,

1 Cor.
16. 3.

1 Tim. 3.
10.

which imports, such a kind of proving as a man makes use of, when he inquires and searches into a thing to finde out the nature of it. The Holy Ghost sometimes uses it as *Verbum juridicum*, noting the process of such as are in Authority, in trying of *Candidates*, or such as are to be chosen into places of trust, whether they are fit for them. Thus *Paul*, who is very frequent in the use of the word, speaking to *Timothy*, concerning *Deacons*, saith *δοκίμαζοντες πρῶτον*, *they must first be proved*. He would not have him to receive into Church Offices all such as should think themselves fit, but whom he himself upon due examination and tryall should think fit. Sometimes he uses it as *Verbum aurificum*, noting the method of Goldsmiths, whose manner is *δοκίμαζειν*, to prove and try their Gold, both by the Fire and the Touch-stone, that so they may discover the nature and value of it. One while they bring it to the Fire, and thereby finde out the dross; another while to the Touch-stone, and so discover what is counterfeit. And this kinde of prudent circumspection and caution, the Apostle would have the *Thessalonians*, and all Christians to use in matters of Religion. He would not have them to take things upon trust, to think that all is gold that glisters, that all is sound that is recommended to them as such, or that at the first view seems to be such, but he would have them to bring it to the Fire and Touch-stone of the sacred and unerring Word, and then close with it or reject it so far as upon due tryall they shall finde cause.

2. What those things be which are to be proved; and those are *varia*, all things whatsoever. For though that which the Apostle here delivers were occasioned by the contemptuousness of some, and the credulity of others among the *Thessalonians* towards preaching, yet his words are universal and general, and therefore (there being the same reason for proving of other things, as well as preaching) they are not to be look'd upon as referring only unto preaching, but as extending unto all other wayes, whereby Teachers may recommend any thing to their people, for their belief and practice: which way soever it is that they deal with them, whatsoever it is that they deliver to them, they must make proof of it ere they embrace it. They must prove the Faith they would have them to profess, the Worship they would have them to observe, the Discipline they would have them to close with, the course of life they would have them to follow, with all the particular Doctrines they would have them assent to, and the several Duties they would have them perform. *Bellarmine* would perswade us, that the Apostle by *all things* intends only *doctrinam dubiam*, such Doctrine as is doubtfull and uncertain; which he would have us to think the Doctrine of lawfull Pastors is not, but *aperte bona*, manifestly good. Answ. 1. Did ever man, that knew what the terms, Doctrine, and Pastor, meant, assert a grosser untruth? Is all the Doctrine of lawfull Pastors good, and manifestly good? What did he think of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*? did he not teach a little before, that

1. 3. de
Verb. l. 3.
c. 10.

that 1. 3. c. 5.

l. 3. 6. 5. they were lawfull Pastors? And was all their Doctrine good, and manifestly good? Do's not our Saviour the ablest in the World to judge, lay it to their charge, that they made the *commandment of God of none effect by it*? Or what did he think of the Antients, whose authority he do's upon all occasions urge us with? were not they lawfull Pastors? And yet do they not teach many errors? Do they not frequently contradict one another, nay themselves? Nay, what did he think of many of his own Writers of greatest credit and esteem? were not they lawfull Pastors? And yet hath not Dr. *Morton* in his *Appeal*, produced multitudes of clear testimonies out of them, for almost every point we maintain against the Church of *Rome*? Nay, do's not *Bellarmino* himself, ever and anon, after he hath recited their opinions, reject them as erroneous and unsound? 2. It is no new thing for lawfull Pastors to degenerate into Hereticks, and oppose those Truths that formerly they have asserted and defended. What would he have said to *Arrius*, *Macedonius*, *Nestorius*, *Eutiches*? Were not they lawfull Pastors, and yet did they not fall into blasphemous and dangerous heresies, and with both zeal and confidence preach the same? Now when they preached them, was their Doctrine good and manifestly good, and such as the people ought to receive without any scruple or censure? If so, then it was their duty to blaspheme God, overthrow Religion, and undo themselves and others. And thus you see whither these Principles lead, and what it is to cast your selves upon the sincerity of men, and rest

rest upon their authority. It exposes to no less than the danger of blasphemy, ruine and confusion. To secure us from which, God hath propounded this remedy, that we should not *cæcâ fide*, take things upon trust, but bring them to trial, and thereby inform our selves of the nature of them. This every man ought to do, and this every good man does do; for as the Apostle saith, *He that is spiritual judgeth all things.* 1 Cor. 2. Whiles *natural* men, that is, carnal, unregenerate^{15.} ones, who are blind, and cannot discern; and careless, and will not discern, make no distinction of things, but turning their souls into so many impure links, receive all that comes, whether good or bad, he who is *spiritual*, that is, he who is acted, inlightned and sanctified by the Spirit, and minds and lives upon spiritual things, takes another course: he neither receives all, nor rejects all, but as the Apostle saith, he *judgeth* all, and then receives what is good, and rejects what is bad.

3. Who they be that are to prove all things; and those are all Christians, every one that is a member of the Church, every one that hears the Gospel preached, nay, every one that would not fall into those delusions that attend implicit faith and blind obedience. It does not onely belong to Governours, whether Civil or Ecclesiastical, Supreme or Subordinate; but unto all persons whatsoever that would secure themselves against error and destruction. For the Apostle does not in this place direct his discourse to Governours onely in the Church of *Thessalonica*, either of one sort or other; but to all the members

l. 3. de
verb. l. 3.
c. 10.

bers thereof without any exception, willing every of them, as they tendered their own safety, to perform this necessary and important duty of Christian trial. *Bellarmino* indeed, that he may the better evade the force of this place, tells us that when *Paul* saith, *prove all things*, he meant not, *ut omnes de ecclesia id faciant*, that all in the Church should do it, but that those should do it to whom it belong'd: As if one should write to an Univerſity to examine ſuch a book, it were not to be thought it were intended that every one in the Univerſity ſhould do it, but onely the Doctors of that faculty whereof the Book treats. But this is a frivolous ſhift; for 1. The Apoſtle does not direct his Epiſtle to the Paſtors of the Church of *Thessalonis*, but the Church there, whom, without any exceptions or limitations, he adviſes to this duty, which is a plain evidence that he intended it rather for the People than the Paſtors. For though I grant, that by the word *Church* in Scripture, we are ſometimes to underſtand the Paſtors thereof, duly aſſembled, for the determining of the differences that lie before them; yet we do not find that any of the Epiſtles, the Apoſtle directed to the ſeveral Churches to whom he wrote, were intended peculiarly for the Paſtors, but that belonged to the People equally with them. 2. The whole ſcope and matter of the Epiſtle (which no doubt he ſuited to the perſons, whoſe inſtruction and uſe he intended in it) do equally concern the People with the Paſtors. Do but peruſe his Salutations, Commendations, Narratives, Doctrine, Exhortations, Thankſgivings, and you ſhall find, they are accommodated

commodated to the People as well as the Pastors; nay, rather to the People than them. Nay, 3. The Apostle, as if he had, *de industria*, design'd the anticipating of such an objection, and made it his business to assure us, that he intended the People as well as the Pastors in this precept, as also in those prefixed and annexed to it, does in the 12 and 13 verses openly address himself to them: *We beseech you*, (saith he) *brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their works sake.* Here certainly, if he understood what he said, he meant not the Pastors but the People.

4. As if all this were not sufficient, he ushers in the words of the Text with a precept, that does principally, if not onely, concern the people, which he prefixes immediately before them, *Despise not prophesyings*; whereunto, as an antidote against running into the extremes before mentioned, he subjoyns, *prove all things*. Now what reason can be rendred, wherefore the former precept (as well as those which go before and follow after) should belong to the People and not this, all the while it hath nothing in its own nature, but what is proper and agreeable to their state? none at all. And therefore rejecting this and such like vain cavils, suiting neither with the design of the Spirit of God, nor the safety of Religion, we are to look upon this duty as belonging, not onely unto Pastors, but likewise the people, who by virtue thereof stand bound, to prove what is delivered to them as well as they.

4. What

4. What it is by which all things must be proved. In all rational and orderly trials there is still something supposed, to which we reduce what we are trying, and if we find it agreeable thereunto, we approve of it; if not, we reject it. And we must of necessity take this course, for it is impossible that we should ever bring any trial to a fair issue, until we agree upon some common rule to proceed by. To engage in a debate without premising certain *suppositions*, or *common principles*, acknowledged on all sides, as the measure thereof, is to follow an *ignis fatuus*, run after our own shadows, and create to our selves fruitless as well as endless trouble. Since therefore it is the duty of every one to try what comes before him, and that there must of necessity be some rule to proceed by, I shall in the next place enquire what this rule is, by which we must make this trial; and we need not to go far to learn tydings of it, we need neither to *ascend into heaven*, nor *descend into the deep*; for it is nigh us, even in our mouths, and in our hearts. It is, in plain terms, none other than the word of God, contained in the writings of the Prophets and Apostles, to which he hath directed us to have recourse upon all occasions, as the infallible measure of truth and falsehood, good and evil. To the law and the testimony, (saith the Prophet) if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. In which he plainly shews whither we must go with our doubts and scruples, with whom we must consult, and of whom we must take advice: not of them that have familiar spirits, not of wizards that peep and mutter;

Rom. 10.
6.

Isa. 8. 10.

utter; but of the law and the testimony. There is all the reason imaginable, that he who made the world should rule and govern it, and that in order thereunto he should give forth Laws containing his sovereign will and pleasure, touching the obedience and service he expects from his creatures; and this he hath fully done in his word, whereby he hath guided his Church all along from first to last, though with some variation, ever since she had a being. Before the fall, he guided her by it according as he had writ it in mans heart; from the fall to *Moses*, according as he was pleased to grant it forth and renew it by occasional revelations; and from *Moses* till this time, according as he hath, by his own Secretaries, set it down in the holy Scriptures, with which he will have us in all cases to consult, and to which we must constantly cleave, without warping or turning aside either one way or other. And hither it was that our Saviour, the Prophets, Apostles, and Pastors of the ancient Church, upon all occasions betook themselves; hereby it was that they taught the Doctrine of salvation, defended the truth, refuted error, established the weak, convinced gain-sayers, and set up the Kingdom of God in the world. Hereby it was that they subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, stopped the mouths of Lions, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight the armies of aliens. *Clement of Alexandria* speaking of the word, saith, it is ἀνδρῶν ἡ ἰουδαίων κερταῖον, the touchstone of truth and falsehood. So it is in it self, and so in the primitive and purer times it was ever esteemed.

Heb. xi. 33

Strom. l. 7. ad fin.

Theodoret

Inst. l. 1. Theodoret tells of Constantine, that he would
 6. 7. have the Fathers in the Council of Nice to take
 the resolution of things in question, *ἐκ τῶν θείων
 γραφῶν λόγων*, out of the divinely inspired writings.
 He would not have them to trust to their num-
 ber, learning, judgment, or any such uncertain
 thing, but to the Scriptures, which he look'd
 upon as fittest to decide all controversies in
 Religion. And they readily complied with him,
 laid the Scriptures before them, searched them,
 and determined all by them. There was then no
 such crying up of Traditions, appealing to the
 authority of the Church, and enquiring after
 the Oracles of the Porphyry Chair, as later ages
 have been acquainted with; but they contented
 themselves with the Lamp of the Word, steered
 their course by it, and fram'd all according to
 it. And the same method they used in succeeding
 Councils; when ever they assembled for the de-
 ciding of any controversy, they still brought the
 Bible along with them, and reverently laid it
 before them, as the only authentick rule where-
 by they were to judge of the matters they had in
 hand. And thus we must do, hither we must
 bring whatsoever is tendered to us to be believed,
 observed or done. Answerable hereunto is that
 which we find contained in the Confession of the
 Church of England, *The Canonical Scriptures* (say
 they) *is the certain rule, ad quam omnis doctrina Ec-
 clesiastica debet revocari, to which all ecclesiastical
 doctrine ought to be reduced; against them neither
 Law, Tradition or Custom is to be heard.* Hither
 it is that we must bring, not onely the Doctrins
 of single Pastors, but the Decrees of Councils,
 and

and the Determinations of Kings and Parliaments, how wise or just soever they are. Though they be high, and upon that account are to have Honour and obedience, yet there is one that is higher than they, whose Authority and Laws we must prefer before all Authority and Laws whatsoever: otherwise we should violate our allegiance, and forfeit our souls into the hands of Justice. To be short, the Word is that whereby we must try and judge all, and whereby we must rate and value every thing that is presented to us, neither condemning any thing it allows, nor allowing any thing it condemns, but esteeming of every thing according to the judgment and Sentence thereof. Herein we have the suffrage of some of our adversaries themselves. Menasseh Ben Israel saw so much, that he said, *All writings are true or false, quatenus conveniunt cum divinis libris aut ab iisdem discrepant*, so far as they agree with the holy Scriptures, or differ from them. And Andreas Fracins Modreus, a Popish Author, writes to the same purpose. *All those things (saith he) are to be examined, as scripturas divinae, by the holy Scriptures; that are to be ratified and established in the Church of God.* Had all Jews and Papists kept close to the profession and practice of this Doctrine, they had not fallen into that lamentable apostasy that they lie under the guilt of at this day, to the drawing down of the just displeasure of God upon them, and the occasioning the Church of Christ to separate from them.

5. How, or after what manner we must prove all things. For the better understanding of this,

we

*De fragilitate
hum. p. 109*

*1. 4 de
Eccl. c. 7.*

*1. Col. 2
3. 8.*

we must note, that unto a regular and fair tryal, some things are necessary as *antecedents*, others as *concomitants*, and others as *consequents*; to each of which I shall speak somewhat, taking them in order.

1. Unto a due tryall, some things are necessary as *antecedents*, or Preparatives, serving to dispose, and make way for a successfull management of the work. And,

1. We must humble our selves before God, under the sense of our great darkness, ignorance, and folly, unfeignedly lamenting the loss of that light, knowledge, and wisdom we had by our Creation; confessing with much sorrow and brokenness of heart, that we have thereby rendered our selves altogether unworthy to come to the knowledge of the truth. When *John* saw there was no one found worthy to open and read the little Book, or look therein, *he wept much*. It is a sad thing to be ignorant of the will of God: It is sinfull, uncomfortable and dangerous, and therefore we should humble our selves under the sense of it, abhorring and despising our selves, that we have sinn'd away our light, and thereby made our selves strangers to what we were once acquainted with. One of the first things a man is to do in order to the obtaining of true wisdom, is to acknowledge his own folly. Hence that of the Apostle, *if any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise*. Not that he must give over the use of his Reason, or utterly renounce what he knows, but he must look upon himself as imperfect, and short of those attain-

Rev. 5. 4.

1 Cor.
3. 18.

attainments he should arrive to; which do's much towards the preparing of him for further growth.

Epict. Arrianus writes an intire chapter of the beginning of *Philosophy*, and shews that the first thing a man is to do in order to his becoming a *Philosopher*, is *συναίσθησις τῆς αὐτοῦ ἀδυναμίας, καὶ ἀδυναμίας*, or, *the consideration of his own insufficiency and weakness.* l. 2. c. 11. p. 154.

As long as a man conceits he knows enough, hee'll care little for knowing more. Many had found out the Truth, if they had not flattered themselves with vain apprehensions of being already possessors of it. I speak not this, as if I would have all turn *Scepticks*, or give up themselves to irrational and groundless doubtings, the common Engines whereby Satan draws men to error and apostacy, but that they should understand their own condition, remember from whence they are fallen, consider what imperfections do attend them, humble themselves before God, and mourn under the sense thereof, which is the way to render God propitious, and prevail with him to reveal his minde to us. Though he be willing to teach, yet before he do's it, hee'll have us to be sensible both that he is able to teach us, and that we stand in need of being taught, and when we are thus qualified, we are fit to enter into his School, and not till then. If we mean to find out the truth, we must not usher in our enquiries after it, with high self-admiring thoughts, but throwing our selves down at the feet of that Majesty we have offended, we must look upon our selves as empty, foolish Creatures, wholly unfit to be acquainted, or have to do, with Sacred things. And to encourage us hereunto,

Fl. 25.9. God tells us, that *the meek will be guide in judgement, and the meek will be teach his way.* Such is the respect that he bears to meek and humble men, that he hath promised when they sit in Judgement on such things as come before them, he will guide and assist them, that so they may not pass an unjust sentence, but such as is according to truth. While he suffers the proud and haughty to follow their own imaginations and delusions, he will direct them in judging, and instruct and teach them the way they are to go.

2. We must address our selves unto God in Prayer, and with all holy importunity and earnestness intreat him to assist us in the business we have in hand, reveal his minde to us, and help us to close therewith. Though we have all outward advantages of finding out the truth, yet unless he be pleased to open our eyes, and shew us the evidence and beauty of it, we are never the nearer. The doctrine of Religion is attended with so many abstruse and stupendous mysteries, that its beyond the ability of any mortal man, without the direction of supernient, auxiliary light to understand it. This our Saviour teaches when he saith, *No man hath ascended up to Heaven, but he that came down from Heaven.* By *ascending* into Heaven he means, not a going up thither in a proper sense, but a perfect understanding of heavenly mysteries, which no man how great soever his perspicacity or diligence was, did ever fully attain unto. And with this agrees that of the judicious Calvin, *ascending into Heaven* (saith he) signifies, *puram mysteriorum Dei notitiam, & spiritualis intelligentie*

Joh. 3.19.

Com. in loc.

the light, the pure knowledge of the mysteries of God, and the light of spiritual understanding. Upon our Saviours asserting to Nicodemus the necessity of Regeneration (a mystery he understood not) he breaks forth into audacious and arrogant expostulations with him, demanding of him, *How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mothers womb? and how can these things be?* He pretended to come to him as unto a Teacher sent from God, attended with his presence, and able to demonstrate the truth of his Doctrine by Miracles, and yet instead of submitting to his authority and wisdom, as he ought to have done, he thus proudly and vainly reasons with him, behaving himself as if he thought nothing could be truth but what he apprehended to be so. And thus while he seems to contradict our Saviours Doctrine, he unawares verifies it, declaring to us by his own example, that the greatest Masters of Learning are unable to receive the things of the Spirit of God, till he help them to do it. *Theophilacti* Com. in Luk. 14 speaking of the Carnal man, saith, *under ὁρᾷ φησὶ νῦν, he believes nothing above Nature.* He measures the arm of the Creator by the arm of the Creature, the abilities of Divine Power by the abilities of Nature, and what will overmatch the latter, he thinks will also overmatch the former. And after this manner Nicodemus (who, one would have thought, being a Master of Israel, should have known better) carryed himself: Though he acknowledge our Saviour to be come from God, yet he will not take his word. He must either know how and by what

means, a man should be born again, or else he will not believe there can be any such thing. Now our Saviour the better to repress this his vain and foolish arrogancy, and thereby make way for his own Doctrine, acquaints him with the utter inability of men by their own power to understand Heavenly Truths, and withall lets him know it was his Prerogative who came down from Heaven, and at that time in respect of his Divine Nature, was in Heaven to do it. It is as easie for a man in a proper sense to climbe up to Heaven, as by his own power fully and savingly to understand the Doctrine of Religion. Now this consideration, as it was a proper antidote for the self-conceitedness of Nicodemus, so it may serve as a strong argument unto us, both to humble us under the sense of our insufficiency, and also stirre us up to seek unto him who is able to relieve us. As we must not judge our selves sufficient to understand heavenly truths, so neither must we content our selves with our own insufficiency, but we must seek unto him for direction and help.

Ps. 119. 18. This course David took, *Open thou mine eyes* (saith he) *that I may behold wonderful things out of thy Law.* Though he were a man of eminent knowledge, wiser than his Teachers, yet he was sensible of his own imperfection, and runs to God for a supply thereof. And this course likewise the Apostles took; when ever our Saviour delivered any thing that exceeded their capacities, they intreated him to expound it to them.

Mat. 13. 36. *Declare unto us* (say they) *the Parable of the tares of the field.* And when he had shewed them what

defiles

defiles a man, they desired him to tell them the meaning of it, saying, *declare unto us this Parable.* And when he had spoken to them of the destruction of the Temple, they came to him privately, saying, *Tell us when shall these things be.* And the same course they took themselves, the same they prescribed unto others. *If any of you (saith one of them) lack Wisdom, let him ask it of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.* Though we want Wisdom, there is enough in God: he is the Father of Lights, the only wise God, infinite in understanding; and he is ready to communicate to his Creatures. As the Sun offers its light unto the World, so do's he offer his assistance to us; and therefore we should neither allow our selves in darkness, nor stand complaining of it, but run to him for light. Whenever we find our selves at a loss, we must run presently to him, and desire him to enlighten our darkness, resolve our doubts, and make our way plain for us. When men urge upon us New Doctrines and Canons, we must take them as *Hezekiah* did *Rabshakeb's* Letter, and laying them before the Lord, say, *Lord, shall we believe or shall we not believe? shall we obey or shall we not obey? since thou wouldst not have us erre, keep us that we may not do it.* Such behaviour will both please him, and conduce to our own safety. *Calvin* writing upon the Text hath this passage. *If (saith he) we perceive our selves to be destitute of the faculty of proving aright, ab eodem spiritu qui per Prophetas suos loquitur petenda est, we must beg it of the same spirit which speaketh by*

Mat. 7. 17.

Mat. 24. 3.

Jam. 1. 5.

Isa. 37. 14.

the Prophets. He is the author and Fountain of Truth, and is only able to open the eyes to see it, and perswade the heart to close with it, and therefore it concerns us and all those who be desirous of it to seek to him for it.

3. We must lay aside and banish from us all prejudice, which way soever it hath been occasioned, resolving freely to close with whatsoever God shall make out to be truth to us. We must not bring our Religion to the Scriptures, but receive it from them. We must not, as most do, first take up such opinions, as our own interests shape out to us, and then bring them to the Scriptures, rather to confirm than examine them, thinking then as simple people do of the Bells, that whatever they say, is for us, but discharging and stripping our selves naked of all prejudicate apprehensions and opinions, we must go to the Scriptures, with mindes ready to embrace whatever God shall thereby reveal to us, resolving with *Micaiah* that *what the Lord saith unto us*, that we will close with, being equally content to follow his voice which way soever he shall call us. Prejudice is a preposterous judgment whereby we pass sentence upon things before we have duely inform'd our selves concerning them, and so come to approve what we should condemn, and condemn what we should approve. *Augustine* saith, it is *inordinata addictio*, the condemning of a person or thing unheard. Now this we must by all means beware of; we must neither approve nor condemn things before we hear them, but we must grant them a fair trial, and then deal with them as we shall thereby

1 Kings
22. 14.

Ad frat.
in Exem.

by finde cause. We must neither judge persons nor things, *indictâ causâ*, before we have heard them: that was not only disallowed, as *Nicomachus* shews, among the *Jews*, but likewise, as *Tully* shews, among the *Romans*, who punished such as they found guilty of it. Though what we have before us be a truth, yet we sin, if we close with it, ere we have made tryall of it. The Judge that passes sentence before he hath heard both parties, errs, though his sentence be in it self just, because through his preposterousness it might have proved otherwise. And so it is in this case; he that takes up an opinion, before he hath made proof of it, errs, though it be in it self good, because through his inconsiderateness and rashness it might have proved evil. It is not enough that we take up the Truth, except we take it up upon mature consideration, and good grounds, sufficient in their kinde to satisfie us that it is the Truth, which we have before us. But such is the indiscretion and rashness of most, that they espouse Opinions and wayes, and are ready to persecute all that will not joyn with them therein, before they have made any tryall of them, or can give any rational grounds for their so doing. Thus did the *Jews* and *Ephesians*; they were both full of heat and rage; the former against Christ, the latter against his Servants, but neither of them knew why. And there are more than a few of such as these amongst us, who have a zeal, but not according to knowledge. They are very forward in their way, but can render little more reason for it, than they can for the cbbing

Joh. 7.51.

Orat. pro
Cluent.

Luk 23.27

Acts 19.32

Rom. 10.2

and flowing of the Sea at its appointed times. Perhaps they can alledge such things as education, custom, carnal interest, the example of the multitude, the command of Superiours; but alas, what uncertain silly things are these for men to build their Religion upon? *To be laid in the balance they are altogether lighter than vanity.* Now for the preventing of the many evils attending on this precipitant course, it behoves us to enquire, what opinions we like and what we dislike, and upon what grounds we like the one and dislike the other; and if upon enquiry we find, that we have through prejudice, that is to say, immature hasty judgment, or otherwise, taken up a liking of what we should dislike, or a disliking of what we should like, we must not onely, for the repairing of the honour of the truth, which we have sinfully violated, but also for our own safety, return again, and steer a new course.

2. Having thus spoken of such matters as are necessary to this proof of things as *antecedents*, or preparatives, I shall now speak of such as are necessary, as *concomitants* or adjuncts. And,

1. We must prove them caretully, as things that concern our souls, and everlasting happiness, and wherein we cannot mistake without danger of utter ruine. We must not run over the work heedlessly and slightly, (that's the way to favour error and wrong the truth, in as much as we are by nature prone to the former, and averse to the latter) but we must manage it with all holy circumspection and caution, as those who are indeed zealous of the truth, and desirous to find

find it out. We read, *Num'. 9. 8.* that when certain men came to *Moses* for resolution in a case, he was so cautious, that though it were but a business of a *ceremonial* nature, yet he would not presently give judgment in it, but he first goes and *enquires of the Lord* concerning it. And some of the *Jewish* Writers tell us, that there were four sorts of causes that came before *Moses*, two of which were of less moment, the other of greater; in the former he hastned, in the later he delayed; but both concerning the one and the other he said, *לֹא שָׁמַעְתִּי*, *I have not heard*, namely, from the Lord, teaching us thereby, that deliberation and consultation with God, ought to be used in all matters before sentence be given. In our enquiries after the nature of those things which come before us, we must not, with *Pilate*, carelessly demand, *what is truth*, and so dismiss the work; but we must seek it as *Joseph* and *Mary* did Christ, and as *Esau* did the blessing, with *care*, *sorrow* and *tears*. As it is no small blessing to find the truth, so it is no small judgment to miss of it, and therefore it concerns us to use care in our enquiries after it. Such is our proneness to mistake, that we must keep a jealous eye upon our selves, and even when our grounds seem fair and plausible, proceed with caution, lest with *Ixion* we embrace a cloud instead of *Juno*, and with *Diomedes*, take up with weapons of brass for weapons of gold.

2. We must prove them diligently, choosing rather to be at any pains than remain ignorant of the truth. The *Judicial Law* required, that when the Judges sat upon their Tribunal, and had

Jonath.
Targ. in
loc.

Joh. 18. 38.
Luk. 3. 48.
Heb. 12.
17:

Deut. 19.
18.

had a controverſie before them, they ſhould make *diligent inquiſition*. They were not to run over the buſineſs ſuperficially or negligently, but to make thorow enquiry into it; and the reaſon was, that they might not give a falſe and groundleſs, but a juſt and equal ſentence. And if it be a duty to make ſuch diligent inquiſition in matters of ſecular and temporal concernment, it is ſurely much more a duty to do it in matters of ſpiritual and eternal concernment. By how much the ſoul is more to be accounted of than the body, and eternity than time, by ſo much we ſhould be more diligent in our enquiry in the latter than the former. And therefore we muſt ſee that we go thorow with the work, not leaving off till we have been at the bottom, know the ſtate of things, and found where the truth lies. This the word *διωκετε* imports, which, as Dr. *Whitaker* notes, (whole *Cygnia Cantio* was on this ſubject) ſignifies ſo to prove as not to deſiſt, till we have found out τὰ *διωκόμενα*, or the thing we are in purſuit of. God hath preſcribed diligent enquiry after the truth, as the means of finding it, and hath promiſed his bleſſing to it : *If thou ſeekeſt her* (ſaith he) *as ſilver, and ſearcheſt for her as for hid treasures : then ſhalt thou underſtand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God*. Such is the excellency of truth, that it is worthy our greateſt diligence, and upon that account we ſhould ſpare no pains in the ſearch of it. The reaſon wherefore it is hid from many, is not becauſe God is unwilling to reveal it, but becauſe they are not diligent in their enquiries after it : would they but take that

part 1.
p. 691.

Prov. 24. 5.

that pains for it which men do for *silver* and *gold*, they might soon come to the knowledge of it; but they slight it, and are slothful in the search of it, and so go without it. And indeed its just with God to let them seek and not find, till they have learn'd to value and seek it at another rate. If ever we mean to find the truth, and escape the delusions that others perish by, we must labour and take pains for it, nay, and count our selves happy, if in so doing we may attain to the knowledge of it.

3. We must prove them faithfully, weighing the evidence on both sides, and giving sentence according thereunto. We must not judge of things according to what our carnal interests would have them to be, nor according to what at the first sight they may seem to be; but according to what upon due examination and search we shall find them. God does every where in Scripture prohibit and condemn partial and unequal judgment, as that which is highly displeasing and hateful to him, witness that of Moses to his Judges, *Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man, and his brother, and the stranger that is with him. Ye shall not respect persons in judgment, but ye shall hear the small as well as the great: ye shall not be afraid of the face of man, for the judgment is gods.* With which agrees that of our Saviour, *Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.* It must be our care then that truth may take place, and therefore waving all motives and inducements to the contrary, we must give sentence for it.

Deut. 1.
16, 17.

Joh. 7. 24.

The

Plur. de
Isa.

The *Thebans* painted Justice without *hands*, and without *eyes*; teaching by the one, that such as fate in judgment must receive no *bribes*; and by the other, that they must not respect *persons*. From whence we who are *Christians* may gather this useful instruction, That in our judicial proceedings, whether more publick or private, we must not suffer any sinister respects to sway or corrupt us, but following the free and impartial dictates of our own judgment and reason, we must give a just and equal sentence. Error hath commonly many advocates to plead for it, as riches, honour, and the like, that like *Galeacius* his children, follow the foul with passionate and vehement importunity; but stopping our ears at the foolish blandishments and vain suggestions thereof, we must give the truth its deserved preheminance. We must not allow of this opinion, because it wears scarlet, nor dislike that, because it goes in rags. We must not close with the one, because it tends to our worldly making, nor reject the other, because it tends to our undoing; but waving all such trivial considerations, as adding nothing to the true and real worth of them, we must judge of both according as the light of the word, whereby we are to try them, does represent them to us.

3. Having likewise spoken of such matters as are necessary to the proof of things, as *concomitants* or adjuncts; I shall now in the last place pass to such as are necessary as *consequents*, that must follow thereupon. And,

1. When we have made this proof, and have thereby, both according to God's promise, and

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our own desire and expectation, discovered the truth, we must bless and praise him for it, as knowing that without his concurrence and direction, our endeavours, how great soever, would have been altogether ineffectual. Such is the unhappiness of some, that they do not so much as seek for truth, and so deservedly remain strangers to it; others seek it, but through want of help from Heaven do not find it. What cause then shall we have to bless God, if it shall please him not onely to put us upon the seeking it, but by his special assistance enable us to find it? It is a mercy to put us upon seeking it, but more a mercy in seeking it to help us to find it. Oh, truth is a desirable and sweet thing, worthy of our greatest endeavours *till* we have it, and our highest praises *when* we have it; witness that golden dictate of truth it self; *Who so findeth* Prov. 8.
me findeth life, and shall obtain favour from the 35.
 Lord. Though ignorant carnal men, that converse with nothing but dunghills, see no form or comeliness in it, yet in the judgment of all those, who are worth taking notice of, it is most amiable and lovely. Such was the esteem the *Platonist* had of it, that he said, That if Almighty God would be pleas'd to assume a composition, he verily thought he would take Light for his Body, and Truth for his Soul. It is a fruitful bough, a pearl of great price, a rare blessing: and therefore when ever God is pleased to discover it to us, we should be thankful for it. Herein our blessed *Saviour* hath lead us the way. How thankful was he to his Father for revealing it to his Disciples? *I thank thee,* (saith he) *O Father,*

Matth. 11. 25. *ther, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.*

He gives not thanks because God had hid the mysteries of his Kingdom from the wise and prudent, for he would have had all to have been acquainted with them, but that whiles, as a just recompence of their pride and contempt, he hid them from them, he was pleased out of his great mercy and compassion to reveal them unto babes. And if he be thus thankful to his Father for revealing his truth to us, how thankful should we be our selves? If

Laert. ejus
vit. p. 575.

Pythagoras were so affected with his finding out the mystery of the *Triangle*, that he did *εκατόμβην θυσιῶν*, sacrifice a whole Hecatomb, how should we be affected, when God is pleased to reveal to us the mysteries of his Kingdom, and make us partakers of that knowledge which leads unto everlasting life? Such was the ingenuity of *Erastus*, that he protested, that whoever would shew him his error, *Coram Deo & hominibus gratias acturum*, he would give him thanks before God and men. Truth is the light, glory and safety of the soul, that which does direct, beautifie and secure it: and therefore when ever God is pleased to bestow it, we should not onely receive it, but render him thanks for it.

Thef. ep.
Lett. p. 7:

2. When we have made this proof, and have thereby found out the truth, we must faithfully preserve and retain it, suffering neither fraud nor violence to wrest it from us. Till we have it, it must be our care to get it; and when we have it, it must be our care to keep it. This the Apostle shews, when he saith, *Hold fast that which is good.*

good. In our discussion of things, we shall meet both with gold and dross, wheat and chaff; and as we must let go the one; so we must retain the other. We may be sure, that as soon as ever we have got the truth, the *wicked one* will be catching at it; but we must not upon any terms suffer him to bereave us of it. Though he should deal with us as he dealt with our Saviour, offer us *all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them* in exchange of it, yet we must not part with it. We must lay it, as *Mary* did the sayings of our Saviour, in our hearts, and not upon any account whatsoever let it go. This is *Solomon's* advice, *Take fast hold* (saith he) *on instruction, let her not go, keep her, for she is thy life.* Thy life! what more precious than life? what will not a man part with rather than his life? though he love outward enjoyments never so well, yet he'll let them all go rather than part with his life. The wary Mariner, that gets what he hath with so much toil and hazard, will throw all into the sea to save his life. And *Satan* spoke no other than truth, when he said, *Skin for skin, and all that a man hath will he give for his life.* A man will give the skins, not onely of his cattle and servants, but of his own dear children and nearest relations, to save his own. Why, truth is our life, and therefore according to rules of self-preservation, which of all other have the deepest rooting in nature, we should rather part with any thing than let it go. When God hath once revealed it to us, and committed it to our custody, he looks that we should keep it, and will call us to an account for it; and therefore it concerns us to look to it, and preserve

Math 13.
19.

Math. 4. 8.

Luk. 2. 51.

Prov. 4.
13.

Acts 27.
19.

Job 2. 4.

2 Pet. 2.
21.

preserve it. It were far better for us not to have it, than when we have it to let it go. This the Holy Ghost is clear in. *It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment, delivered to them.* The sin of Apostacy is greater than that of bare Infidelity. It is a less sin not to come into Christ, than after we are come in, to turn our backs upon him and leave him. A man can scarcely be born to do Religion greater injury, than for a season to profess it, and afterwards, forsake it. As it do's highly aggravate his sin, so it will his punishment. And therefore it concerns every one that hath searched for the Truth, and attain'd to it, to hold it fast, otherwise his *latter end* will be *worse than the beginning.*

Mat. 5. 15.

3. When we have by our proof found out the Truth, we must communicate and reveal it to others, that they being enlightened by it may serve God with us, and receive the rich blessings that do attend it. When God is pleased to deliver the Candle of his Word into our hands, it is not that we should *put it under a bushel, but on a Candlestick, that it may give light to all that are in the house.* When he put light into the Sun, Moon and Stars, it was not that they should shine unto themselves, but that they should enlighten the World; so when he reveals his truth to any of his servants, it is not that they should imprison it within the private walls of their own bosoms, but that they should lift it up, and hold it forth to others. One great Office of the Church in relation to the Truth, is to *publish it,*
and

and make it known. Though it belong not to her, to decree what shall be Truth, and what not, yet when God who is the essential and eternal Truth, hath decreed it, and made it known to her, she ought to make it known to others. As the Cryer publishes the Decrees and Edicts of the King, so is she, and every member thereof, in his place, and calling, to publish it. And indeed such is the nature of saving Truth, that wheresoever it comes, it provokes, nay constrains the soul to make it known. When God had revealed his minde to *Jeremy*, what a scorching Feaver was he in till he had published it? *His word* (saith he) *was in mine heart, as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.* And when Christ had committed the Gospel to the Apostles, what an holy force did they finde themselves under? *We cannot* (say they) *but speak the things which we have seen and heard.* They were like old Bottles filled with New Wine, till they had delivered the Message wherewith they were intrusted. As soon as ever a man is savingly acquainted with Christ, he presently endeavours to bring in others to him. *Andrew* no sooner findes him, but he brings in *Peter* to him; *Philip* no sooner findes him, but he brings *Nathaniel* to him; and the Woman of *Samaria* no sooner findes him, but she will have the whole City to come out to him. So that you see, Truth is no dull or sluggish, but a lively and active Principle, and such as do's incite the Soul wherein it seats it self, to publish it and make it known. If therefore we will make it to appear we have re-

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whit. part.
1. cont. 1.
9.3. c. 2.
p. 316.

Jer 20. 9.

Acts 4. 10.

Joh. 1. 42,
46 & 1. 29.

ceived the Truth, and will perform that service, we owe to it, we must so far as our places, abilities and opportunities will extend, acquaint others with it.

6. Having thus told you, the *manner* how this proof must be manag'd, not only in respect of the *antecedents*, but likewise in respect of the *concomitants* and *consequents*, I shall now come to the main business, which I have all this while been but making way for, and that is, to evince to you, That there do's by a *divine right*, belong to all Christians, a *private, discretive, self-directive* Judgement, by virtue whereof they not only may, but ought to prove those things that are recommended to them by their Teachers; which I shall endeavour to do by these arguments. And, 1. God himself, whose Word is a sufficient warrant for all their undertakings, out of the respect he bears to their safety and welfare, do's in expresse terms impower, nay charge them to do it. It was never his minde that they they should pin their Faith upon their Teachers sleeves, captivate their Judgments to theirs, or believe and do whatever they think is meet, but that they should take their instructions, definitions, and conclusions, to the rule of the Word, and try them thereby, and then close with them according as the reason they find attending them shall perswade and induce them. This plainly appears by these words of the Apostle, *Prove all things*; which are so clear and full to the point, that nothing but wilfull blindness, or obstinate prejudice, can gainsay them. And yet as if what he saith here, were not sufficient,

cient, he speaks elsewhere to the same purpose; witness that passage to the *Corinthians*; *I speak* 1 Cor. 10.
(saith he) as to wise men, judge ye what I say. 15.
 Here, as *Estius* confesses, he speaks *de judicio* com. in loc.
discretionis, of that Judgement of private discretion we are discoursing of, but then to avoid the force of the place, he tells us that the *Corinthians* were persons of extraordinary gifts and abilities, and therefore though the Apostle do in these words impower them and such like, to judge of the Doctrine of their Pastors, yet it do's not follow that he do's impower all to do it.

Ans. The *Corinthians* indeed were excellently gifted, they had arrived to very high attainments, by reason whereof they were fitter to judge of what the Apostle was about to deliver to them, and therefore he urges it as an argument to them to do it. But yet we must not think that he only aim'd at them, or such as have made the same proficiency with them, in it; for though every Christian have not the same degree of Wisdom that they had, and in that respect be not so fit for the work as they were, yet he hath (as I shall shew anon) that measure, that by prayer, diligence, and the assistance of the Spirit in the use of means, do's render him so far fit for it, as is necessary to his own Salvation. And therefore we must not think that the Apostle do's urge it as a Priviledge or Duty, pertaining only to men of eminent Wisdom, such as many in the Church of *Corinth* were (as the *Schoolman* would have us understand him) but as belonging to all Christians whatsoever. One would think those quick eyes that can, *In thou*

art Peter, read the Popes power of deposing Princes, discharging Subjects of their Allegiance, the translating of their Kingdoms from them, with many such rare mysteries, should in these and such like places, read the Peoples power of judging of Doctrines. But what can be so plain, that interest and prejudice will not contradict?

2. He layes upon them several important Duties that do necessarily suppose it, insomuch that unless they be allowed the liberty of Christian proof, they cannot perform them. As,

1. He will have them to use caution about their Teachers. They must carefully distinguish betwixt the true and the false, betwixt the Messengers of Christ and the Messengers of Antichrist. Beware (saith our Saviour) of false Prophets which come to you in Sheeps cloathing, but inwardly they are ravening Wolves. And what course will he have them to take that they may distinguish betwixt the true Prophets and the false? Why, he tells them; ye shall know them by their fruits: And what are these fruits? are they their Lives? No; those are no sure Rule to go by: for Hypocrites and Deceivers can make as great shews of piety and holiness as the best men whatsoever. And therefore these Fruits whereby the People must distinguish the false Prophets from the true, are rather (as Dr. Whitaker shews) their interpretations, expositions, and doctrines, than their lives. Thereby it is that all those who would inform themselves concerning them, must try what they are. And agreeable to this Precept of our Saviour, is that other

Mat. 7.
15, 16.

Part. I.
cont. 1. 7. 5.
c. 8. p. 359.

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of the Apostle; *Beloved, believe not every Spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God.* It is to be observed, he speaks this to those whom he terms *audia, little children*, which (as Davenant well notes) do's far better agree *privatis fidelibus*, to private Believers, than to Doctors and Rulers. It belongs then to private Believers, even to such as the Holy Ghost thinks meet to speak of under the appellation of *little children* to make tryall of their Teachers. And whereby must they come to know what they are, but by their *fruits*, which as you have heard, are their Doctrines? When the Holy Ghost therefore do's in these places admonish the faithfull to use this prudent Caution a out the r Teachers, and do's propound their Doctrine as that whereby they must distinguish them, he do's in effect bid them prove their Doctrine.

2. He will have them to see that they suffer not themselves to be poysoned or corrupted by such Doctrines as are erroneous and unsound. They must not only distinguish betwixt Teachers and Teachers, but betwixt Doctrines and Doctrines, taking care they receive what is good, and avoid what is bad. This the Holy Ghost insists much upon. And Gratian tells out of *Isidorus*, that if he who is over the People, teach or command any thing besides the will of God, or besides what is evidently required in the Holy Scriptures, they are to look upon him *tantum falsus Dei testis, aut sacrilegus, as a false Witness of God, or sacrilegious.* It is then past doubt, that the people must use circumspection, and not suffer themselves to be deceived; but

1 Joh. 4. 1.

De Jud. 4.
27. p. 162.

Mat. 24. 4.

Eph. 1. 6.

2 Thess. 2.

3.

caus. 11.

9. 3.

since there are so many false Teachers in the World, and so much unsound Doctrine broached by them, how is it possible they should escape being deceived, unless they be allowed to prove what is delivered to them before they close with it.

3. He will have them, when their Teachers fall into Errors, grow negligent, or fail in their Duty to admonish them and exhort them. *Paul* will have the *Colossians* to say to *Archippus*, take heed to the Ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfill it. *Aquinas* saith, this *Archippus* was the Bishop of *Coloss*; and propounding this Question, *Utrum quis teneatur corrigere Prelatum suum*, Whether any man be bound to reprove his Prelate; he determines it affirmatively, urging this very place for what he asserts, inferring from it, that the People, when there is occasion may reprove their Prelates, so they do it cum reverentia, & honore, ac mansuetudine, with reverence, honour and meekness. And *Gratian* shews from Pope *Eusebius*, that people may reprove their Pastors in case they do à fide exorbitare, depart from the Faith. In the Judgement then of the very *Papists* themselves, and those too, who are of greatest account, if Ministers, nay the Prelates, miss it in their proceedings, the People not only may but ought to tell them of it, and admonish them about it. And how shall they do this, unless they may have liberty to censure and make a Judgement upon what they say and do.

4. When the Church wherein they live, do's apostatize and decline, he will have them to sit
in

in judgment upon her, and protest against the corruptions they find her guilty of. This appears by the charge the Prophet gives, *Plead* (saith he) *Hof. 2. 2.*
with your mother, plead, where observe,

1. Who they be he gives this charge to; and those are the godly ones in *Israel*, who remain'd faithful and stedfast in that time of general Apostasie that the Prophet in this book refers to. Though the body of the Nation followed *Jero-boam*, and gave up themselves to superstition and idolatry; yet there were some that stood their ground, and continued upright; and those the Prophet in this place directs his speech to.

2. Who it is that he means by *Mother*, and that (as *Zanchy*, *Rivet*, and others shew) is *Israelitica Com. in loc.*
Ecclesia, the Church of *Israel*, consisting of Magistrates, Ministers and People, as she lay in her corrupt state, polluted with idolatry, which she fell into by walking after the commandment of the wicked Prince before mentioned, whom God hath for ever stigmatized with this mark of infamy, that he *made Israel to sin*.

3. What it is he will have them to do, and that is, *Plead with her*; the word in the original is, *רִיב*, which interpreters do variously render; the vulgar *Latin* turns it, *judicate*, judge her; *Pagnine* *contendite*, contend with her; *Vatablus*, *expostulate*, expostulate with her; *Calvin*, and others, *litigate*, plead with her. The Prophet would have them to enter into judgment with her, censure her, and deal with her by such arguments, reproofs and admonitions, as might best serve to convince her of the sin she stood guilty of, and bring her to repentance.

4. The repetition, *plead, plead*, whereby he does not onely hold forth the necessity and importance of the work, but likewise intimates, that they must do it speedily, boldly and vigorously, as those that were troubled to behold the honour of God suffer by her apostasie, and desirous to see it repaired by her return. So that the words imply as much as if he had said, Ye pious and faithful ones in *Israel*, who adhere unto God, and stand up for his pure worship and service, you see how lamentably your Mother the Church, that should have been an example to you of piety and constancy, is revolted and fallen to idolatry: as ever you will make it to appear you have any zeal or love to the truth, take her case into consideration, tell her of her fault, reprove her for it, reason with her about it, and do all you can to reduce her into those holy ways she heretofore walked in, and in compliance with the commandment of her wicked King hath so unworthily forsaken. We see then the Church, notwithstanding the uncontrollable height that some advance her to, is no such tremendous thing, but that even private men may, by divine allowance, freely censure her, and expostulate with her about her proceedings: and how shall they do this, unless they exercise a *judgment of discretion* to direct and guide them in it?

5. He will not have them to do any thing rashly, or with doubting, but throughly to inform and satisfie themselves of the lawfulness of it, ere they undertake it: *Let every man (saith Paul) be fully persuaded in his own mind.* Before they

Rom. 14.

5.

they close with any doctrine, or set upon any service, they must enquire into it, and be persuaded, nay, fully persuaded of the warrantableness of it. They must not go upon slight probabilities or conjectures, but must be at a certainty, so that they may say with *Peter*, in the name of himself and the rest, *We believe and are sure*. Joh. 6. 69. But how is it possible they should attain to this full persuasion and certainty of the nature and state of things, unless they make proof of them? what, is the testimony of others sufficient security to them? Then what error is so great or dangerous, that they may not be fully persuaded and assured of?

6. He would have them to decline *evil* and chuse *good*, forsake the *one* and hold fast the *other*. This is set down as plainly in Scripture as if it were written with a beam of the Sun. But unless they may bring things to trial, how shall they be able to do it? How shall they distinguish betwixt good and evil? how shall they know what to chuse and what to refuse, when to stand and when to go? 1 Pet. 3. 11. Isa. 1. 16, 17.

7. He will have them to clear up their evidences for heaven, and ascertain themselves of their salvation. This the Apostle aims at when he saith, *Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure*. There is a two-fold certainty of a mans calling and election; there is *certitudo objecti*, and *certitudo subiecti*; a certainty of the thing itself, and a certainty thereof to a man's own soul; the one results from the sincerity and truth of grace, the other from the reflexion or manifestation of it. It is the latter of these the Apostle 2 Pet. 1. 10.

Apostle aims at in this place ; which how is it possible any one should attain to, unless by his own personal enquiry he make proof of what he believes and does. And thus you see God requires of the people several unquestionable duties which do necessarily suppose this power of trial, so that it must either be granted, that he intended it for them, or else that he hath put them upon insuperable difficulties, which to affirm were no less than blasphemy.

3. He impowers them to do divers things in Religion that are of a more eminent nature, and call for greater abilities than the judging of Doctrines for their own private use does. He allows them in a *charitative, private* way to teach, exhort and warn one another, for their mutual edification and furtherance in the faith. Paul charges the *Thessalonians* to *warn the unruly, comfort the feeble minded, support the weak, &c.* And in answer hereunto we find, that *Aquila* and *Priscilla*, seeing *Apollos* (though an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures) short in some points in Christianity, *they took him and expounded the way of God to him more perfectly.* And he does not onely allow them to do it thus in a private way, but likewise upon *special* occasions, when the *necessities* of the Church do require it, in a more publick. The Scripture makes mention of several, who though they were but private Christians, yet embracing the call given them by God, they publicly appeared in the behalf of the truth, openly asserted it, and pleaded for it. *Stephen*, though but a *Deacon*, ordained to *serve tables*, yet being call'd in question

1 Thess. 5.
14.

Acts 18.
24, 26.

Acts 6. 10.
7. 2.

sition by the Jewish council for his faith in Christ,
 he owns him before them all, *teaches* him, and
disputes for him. And *Apollos*, though he were
 but a private man, and knew onely the *Baptism*
 of *John*, yet he disputed with the *Jews*, and
 spoke and taught diligently the things of the Lord.
 Nay, and all the *Disciples*, scattered abroad upon
 the death of *Stephen*, went every where preach-
 ing the word. And if we consult succeeding times,
 we shall find, that the Christians of those days
 did both challenge and practise the like liberty.
Origen, before he entred into holy Orders, ca-
 techised, expounded, disputed, and that pub-
 lickly, both before the Clergy and People. Its
 true, *Demetrius* Bishop of *Alexandria* excepted
 against it, alledging it was without presi-
 dent that lay-men should teach in the Church
 in the presence of Bishops, but *Alexander*
 Bishop of *Jerusalem*, and *Theodotus* Bishop
 of *Cesarea*, took him roundly up for it, charg-
 ing him with a manifest untruth, and telling
 him, that several others as well as *Origen*, though
 but private men, had taken upon them to teach
 in publick Assemblies, even at such times as di-
 vers learned men were present; and that the
 Bishops of those places did not onely allow it,
 but desire them to do it. And they instance in
Evelpis at *Laranda*, requested to it by *Neon*; in
Paulinus at *Iconium*, requested to it by *Celsus*; in
Theodorus at *Synada*, requested to it by *Atticus*.
 And they also add, that it was like that this course
 was practised in other places, though unknown
 to them. And *Socrates* tells of *Ambrose*, that
 whiles he was Lieutenant of *Millain*, and Consul,

Acts 18.
 25.

Acts 8. 4.

Euseb. eccles.
 hist. l. 6. c.
 20. gr.

Eccles. hist.
 l. 4. c. 30.

even

Panph. t. 1.
l. 18. c. 2.
sect. 11.
p. 385.

Hist. eccl. l.
3. c. 23, 24.

even before he was baptized, the people unexpectedly making choice of him to succeed *Auxentius* their deceased Bishop, and the Bishops present allowing of it, he without any more ado took upon him the place. And *Chamier*, out of *Jerom*, makes mention of *Aristides*, *Agrippa*, *Hegesippus*, *Justinus*, *Musanius*, *Modestus*, the two *Apollonii*, *Heraclius*, *Maximus*, and divers others, who though they were never ordain'd to any office in the Church, yet wrote Apologies and Disputations in behalf of the Christian Religion, against Heathens, Hereticks, and the enemies thereof. And he also instances in *Arnobius* and *Augustin*, who fell to write before they were baptized; and in *Leo* the Emperour, whose *Homilies*, *Gretzer*, though an angry and fierce Jesuite, published a while ago, giving them this commendation, that they were by so much the more to be esteemed, *quo pauciora in hoc genere monumenta, ab imperatoribus profecta existent*; by how much the monuments of Emperors of this kind are the more rare. And what will our adversaries say to *Edesius* and *Fruventius*, two Merchants, and young men, that preached the Gospel to the *Indians*; nay, to a *Woman*, that did the like among the *Iberians*, which *Theodore* Bishop of *Cyprus* hath inserted in his History, not letting fall so much as one word by way of reflection or disallowance? By these instances it does in part appear what power private Christians have heretofore challenged as to matters of teaching, and what liberty the Churches wherein they lived granted to them. They did not limit them only to a liberty of assent and obedience to the Doctrines

crimes of their leaders, but they allowed them both to judge and teach the things of God: nay, they gave way that such of them as were able, should upon special occasions publickly censure, expound, dispute, write Treatises. And the Bishops were so far from being displeas'd with it, that they moved them to it, and defended them against the calils of such, as out of error or prejudice excepted against it. In answer hereunto, Stapleton saith, these were rare and extraordinary instances, and so not to be drawn into example. But how can they be said to be rare, when there were so many of them almost in every age? and as for their extraordinariness, Obanier saith, *Catholici negant quicquam in his exemplis fuisse extra ordinem*. That the Protestants deny there was any thing extraordinary in them. But admit they were both rare and extraordinary, yet this we may certainly infer, that private men in like cases may take upon them such services, which yet I doubt his Holiness will hardly give way to.

And thus much for the liberty God allows them as to teaching. Were it needful, I might, for the further proof of the point in hand, add, that he allows them to chuse their several Officers, and, when there is occasion, to admonish them, (as you heard before) reason with them, send them upon messages, recommend them by their Letters; and that likewise he allows them to interpose with their Pastors in Ecclesiastical Censures, judge of offenders, cast out the obstinate, restore the penitent; nay, to sit in council, hear, debate, & give suffrage with them. All which

r. 1. l. 28.
c. 2. sect.
23. p. 585.

Acts 6. 3.
13. 2.
2 Cor. 8.
19.
Col. 4. 17.
Acts 11. 2.
15. 2.
18. 27.
1 Cor. 5.
4. 12.
2 Cor. 2.
6. 7.
Acts 15.
23.

G. Eucer.

Dissert. p.

165

D. Blondel.

apol. sect.

3. p. 379.

De jure, p.

14.

G. Voetius

Desp. caus.

l. 2. sect. 2.

c. 21. p.

268.

I might have spoken of fully, but it is done already by divers learned men, who have employed themselves in asserting their interest in the government of the Church; and I conceive I have said enough for the clearing of the present particulars, and therefore shall forbear to speak any further of them. Now to argue *à majori, ad minus*; if it be the pleasure of God that they should be allowed a power to teach, write, interpose in judicial proceedings, and exert acts of government, which require higher abilities, then it is surely his pleasure that they should be allowed a power of private judgment, which may be managed with lower abilities; what can be more unlikely than that he should think them fit for *greater* matters and not for *less*; allow them to judge for *others*, and not for *themselves*?

4. The truth hereof does also appear from the multitude of intruders, usurpers, and false lights that are in the world, who abusing the vain credulity of people, lead them into miserable delusions. Had all those who intermeddle in Religion a due call, sound principles and good designs, then people might go on with greater confidence, and take things upon trust on better grounds; but its far otherwise. Ever since the Truth first shew'd it self, the world hath even swarm'd with Impostors and Deceivers, who pretend to it, with no less boldness than the faithfullest maintainers of it. Many (saith Christ) shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ. And, (saith Peter) there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you. And, (saith John) Even now are there many
anti-

Mat. 24. 5.

2 Pet. 2. 1.

1 Joh. 2.

18.

antichrists. The devil is God's Ape; for as he hath his Angels, so the devil hath his; and as he hath his Ministers, so the devil hath his, who *compass sea and land* that they may deceive. Now this even in the judgment of the holy Ghost himself, is a proper argument to move all those who would not be deceived, to prove those things that are delivered to them before they close with them; witness that of the Apostle last mentioned, *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world.* Were there never a false prophet in the world, then men might with more safety lay by their jealousy, draw the Curtains about them, shut their eyes, and betake themselves to rest: but while there are such legions of them attending on them, they may not do it, without exposing themselves to apparent hazard.

1 Joh. 4. 1.

5. It does likewise appear from the condition even of those who are faithful Pastors and Teachers; they are subject to mistakes. Though their call, principles and designs be better than those of the former, yet they are not exempted from error: though in regard of their authority, abilities, experience, holiness, they are far fitter to teach and rule than others, yet it must still be remembered that they are but sinful men, subject to the same passions and infirmities that others are, and therefore must be attended to with circumspection and care. He that in good earnest thinks there is on earth either any single person, or any society or order of persons, guided in all things by an infallible spirit, so as that they may,

Rom. 3. 4.

1 Cor. 13.
12.De Jud. c.
27. p. 166.

in whatever they deliver challenge our assent and obedience, without any contradiction or censure, shews he is little acquainted either with Scripture, or what hath happened in the World. Paul cryes out, *let God be true, and every man a liar*; not that he desired that every man might be a Liar, but that they indeed are so, and that the World may take them to be so. What meer mortal man was ever blessed with greater light than this Apostle? who more abounded with Revelations than he? and yet (as he himself confesses) he knew *but in part*. Those who attain to the highest perfection, a state of mortality is capable of, do fall far short of what they should be. As the brightest Stars have in them some darkness, and the clearest dayes some Clouds, so the wisest men have in them some Folly and Error. Herein Davenant is free and peremptory. If (saith he) *thou leave God, and the divinely inspired Prophets, and Apostles, there is not any man or Society of men, qui non er fallere, & falli possit in doctrinâ fidei tradendâ, who may not both deceive, and be deceived in delivering the doctrine of Faith*. And shall people go and give up themselves to the conduct of those who are subject to Error as well as they? Were they priviledg'd from mistake, then they might cast themselves upon their Veracity, and receive their Dictates as so many sacred Oracles; but being it is far otherwise, they may not do it without the guilt of vain confidence and rashness.

6. It do's yet further appear from the lyableness, nay proneness that is in people to be deceived.

ceived. Were it so that there were no false Lights in the World, or that those who are law-
 full Teachers could not deceive; or that the
 People themselves could not be deceived; then
 they might be more secure, but since it is other-
 wise as to each particular, it concerns them to
 be more circumspect. What is to be thought
 of the two former hath been shew'd already,
 and as for the latter, the Case is no less plain.
 Ever since the Eclipse in Eden, the sons of men
 have all along from first to last, lien in darkness;
 and not only so, but they have had in them an
 unhappy averiness to Truth, and proneness to
 error. There was a time when there was a sweet
 union betwixt the Soul and Truth, so that they
 seem'd to lye fast in the sincere embraces of each
 other; but now the stream is turn'd. The re-
 spect that the Soul heretofore bare to Truth,
 it now bears to Error; and the hatred that here-
 tofore it bore to Error, it now bears to Truth.
 This was it which made our Saviour when he
 was on Earth complain, that *light was come into* Joh. 3.19
the World, and men loved darkness rather than
light. And as it was then, so it is now. How
 much are men in love with Error; and how
 little with Truth! Truth, *she cries without,* Prov 1.20
she utters her voice in the streets, she cries in the
chief places of concourse, in the opening of the Gates,
in the City she utters her words, saying, How long
ye simple ones will ye love simplicity — turn you
at my reproof: And it falls out to her as it did to
 Baals Prophets, there is *neither voice, nor any that* 1 King.18;
answers, nor any that regards; but Error no sooner
 29.
 speaks, but people run to it and receive it.

E

Truth

Cant. 5.2.

Truth comes and knocks at the door of their hearts, saying, *Open to me my Sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled, for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night: and they sit still making Excuses, and saying, I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on; I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?* But Error no sooner knocks but they open trust and let it in. How ordinarily do's Truth, that was once so dear unto the Soul stand by despised and rejected, while Error is entertained and embraced! How familiarly do People take up Error into the bed of Truth, and there most unworthily suffer it to ravish them and defile them, to the high provoking of Jesus Christ, who hath strictly charged them to keep themselves *unspotted from the World!*

Jam. 1.17.

Now since men are thus prone to be deceived, what madness is it to take things upon trust, without making tryall of them? What is it less than a tempting of God to forsake them, and a prostituting themselves to the pleasure of every Seducer?

7. For the people to take things from their Teachers upon trust, without any proof is to give them more respect than is due to them; It is no less than to set them in the room of God, make them Lords of their Faith, found their Religion upon their Authority, and so render themselves the meer *servants of men*, which the Holy Ghost do's every where declare against, and condemn, as prejudicial to his Interest, and their own necessary liberty. There was none of the Apostles who preach'd up the authority and honour of Ministers more than Paul, yet would

would not he have people to yield up their Faith to them, or assent to whatsoever they shall deliver; he was so far from laying on them any such duty, that he do's in express terms forbid it, saying, *Be ye not the servants of men.* As he forbids Ministers to challenge an arbitrary, lordly power over people, so he forbids people if they through pride and arrogance do challenge it, to yield it to them. Though he will have them to reverence and encourage them, as they are the *Messengers of God*, & such as do *watch for their souls*, yet he will not have them to look upon them as infallible, or take all upon their word. To be believed merely upon the credit of his own Word, is peculiar to God himself, and may not be given to any of his Creatures how excellent soever, without manifest alienation of his right, which by all means must be maintain'd and kept inviolable. When we have to deal with God, our Enquiry must not be whether that be true which he saith, but whether it be he that saith it, being assured if he say it, it cannot but be true. But when we have to do with men, we are to proceed far otherwise; our enquiry then must not only be, whether it be Man that saith it, but whether that be true which he saith, as knowing from the consideration of his Nature it may be otherwise. God being Truth it self, his bare word is sufficient evidence and security in the most arduous and difficult Cases whatsoever; but it is not so with man: he is not only a Creature, but a lapsed and degenerate Creature, subject to Error, and therefore we must receive his Dictates and Precepts with suspicion, closing

i Cor. 7.
23.

with them no further than he makes it to appear they are conformable to the Divine Law.

8. God hath furnished them with various priviledges and helps, whereby he hath qualified and fitted them for the work.

1. He hath given them his Word as a certain Rule and Measure to direct and guide them, that so they may not make a false Judgement, but such as is according to Truth. That the Scripture, and the reading thereof, do's belong to the people, *Chamier, Whitaker*, and other Protestant Writers have copiously and unanswerably proved. And to what end should they either have it, or read it, unless they be allowed to judge of the sense of it, and the Doctrines of their Teachers by it? God do's not deliver it into the hands of any, to lay it by them as a thing of no use, or wherein they are not concern'd, but that they should acquaint themselves with it, and frame their wayes and doings according to it. The reason wherefore he puts it into the hands of Magistrates, Ministers, People, is that they may each of them thereby come to know their duty, and perform it. The reason wherefore he would have *Joshuah* to meditate in it, was that he might observe to do according to all that was written therein. And the reason wherefore he would have *Timothy* to be conversant in it, was that he might know how to behave himself in the house of God. In like manner, the reason wherefore he would have the *Bereans* to search it, was that they might see whether the things delivered by their Pastors

Josh. I. 8.

*1 Tim. 3.
14. 15.*

*Acts 17.
11.*

were so. And it is not reasonable to think, that God, who is the wise, righteous and merciful Governour of the world, should give Laws to men to live by, and yet should not allow them power and liberty, as to their own private use and practice, to judge of the sense of them, and what is agreeable to them, and what is not.

2. He hath indued them with reason, judgement, wisdom, and such like accomplishments, whereby he hath competently enabled them to do it. There are two things necessary to the begetting of faith; an outward *notification*, or declaration of the Doctrine to be believed; and an inward *illumination* and persuasion of the mind, to see the evidence and truth thereof, and to close with it and embrace it. The former he vouchsafes in his Word, the latter he works by his Spirit; and the faithful having these two, they have all things necessary to this judgment. That they have the former, appears by what I have alledg'd already, and that they have the latter is no less manifest. God hath promised his Church, that he *will teach her children*; and that he *will put his law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts*, inasmuch that *they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for they shall all know him, from the least of them unto the greatest of them*. And what he thus graciously promised in the Old Testament, he hath eminently performed in the New, pouring forth his Spirit in such a plentiful manner upon his people, that according to his own language they *have senses exercised to discern both good and evil*; nay, Heb. 5. 14. they

Isa. 54. 13.

Jer. 31.

33. 34.

1 Joh. 2.
20, 27.

they have such an *unction*, that they know all things, and need not that any man teach them, but as the same *annointing* teacheth them. Which yet the Apostle speaks not, as if those he wrote to knew all things, in a strict and proper sense, for that is God's prerogative; or that they really knew so much, that they needed no teaching at all, for then to what purpose did he send to them this Epistle? but that they knew all the principles and grounds of Religion, and all things that were absolutely necessary for them to know, (especially as to that business he wrote to them about) so that the work of their Teachers was rather to exhort them to perseverance, and build them up higher in the Truths they knew, than acquaint them with new ones. And it is well known, which *Lud. Crocius* tells us, that even among private Christians, there have been some, who by prayer, and the diligent reading and meditating of the Scripture, have obtain'd the gift of interpretation and trial of spirits, *ampliori mensurâ quàm nonnulli pastores*, in a larger measure than some pastors. Not to turn back so far as the times of the Antients, which yet yielded great plenty of eminent men of private capacity, what will our adversaries say to *Laurentius Valla*, the two Earls of *Mirandula*, *Capnio*, *Fagius*, *Erasmus*, *Faber*, *Mercer*, both the *Scaligers*, *Drusius*, *Casaubon*, *Tilenus*, *Grotius*, *Heinsius*, *Selden*, *Salmasius*, ~~Blasius~~, and divers others of later times, who though they never entred into holy Orders yet were men of such high abilities, that their names are famous throughout a great part of the Christian world? And to what end does

does God bestow all this light and wisdom on private persons, that it should lie by them as a thing of no use? no, but that they may thereby, as he himself shews, *know the things that are freely given them of God, and approve things that are excellent.* As Nature does nothing in vain, so neither do's God. When he delivers *Talents* unto his servants, it is not that they should napkin them up, but that they should, as his *Factors* by negotiation, improve them for him. *Zanchius* speaks an undoubted truth when he saith, *Dona Dei in sanctis non sunt otiosa, The gifts of God in his saints are not to no purpose.* When he bestows them upon them, it is not that they should let them lie idle by them, or convert them to a private use, but that they should lay them out for him in the services proper to them. This he takes to be so reasonable, that upon his conferring abilities upon them, he expects that they should, without looking for any particular commission, immediately fall to work, and improve them for him. We need not then go far for arguments to evince the peoples power of judging of doctrines; their qualifications shew it was intended they should do it. As the shape of *Anaxagoras* his body shew'd he was made *μετὰ τὸ θεωρεῖν τὴν ἡλίου*, to contemplate the Sun, so the abilities wherewith God hath fitted them for this judgment, shews he intended them the liberty of it. The very constitution and frame of things, does commonly declare and express their work and office. The figure of a Bowl shews it was made for circular motion; that of an Arrow shews it was made for flight. In like manner the faculties

1 Cor. 2.
12.
Phil. 1. 10.

Com. in
Phil. 1. 10.

and abilities wherewith God hath indued the People, shew he never intended they should be govern'd like beasts, or stones, but as creatures that have power of judging betwixt good and evil.

9. If it be the duty of the people to close with the doctrines and commands of their Teachers, upon a meer implicit faith, without making proof of them, then it is sometimes their duty to close with that which is unlawful and sinful, to omit what God hath required, and commit what he hath forbidden; nay, to deny him, worship idols, and give up themselves to all manner of wickedness; which to maintain is impiety so gross, that one would think, none who believe the Scriptures should be guilty of it. And yet I see not how those, who are for the fore-mentioned implicit faith, can avoid it. Perhaps they'll say, when they plead for peoples obeying the dictates of their teachers, without any examining them, they mean onely in lawful things. As long as they command lawful things, they must obey them, but when they do otherwise, they must not. But this is a miserable *subterfuge*; for how without examination shall they do to know, whether the things they enjoin them be lawful or not lawful? Their Teachers will have them subscribe to such and such points, and practi'e such and such observations; if they are lawful, they must do them; if otherwise, they must not. Now how (as I said) without examination shall they know whether they be lawful or not lawful, whether they may be done or not done? There is no way but two; either

either they must take them upon the word of their Teachers, or not; if not, then they must necessarily examine, which is the thing contended for; if they must, then, I say, they must (sometimes at least) necessarily sin, which yet is altogether indispensable and unwarrantable.

10. If it were the pleasure of God, that people should embrace and submit to the doctrines and precepts of their Leaders, without any examination or doubting, then he would certainly excuse them, if they should thereby fall into error and profaneness. For it may not consist with his justice to require them, without any examination or doubting, to follow the guidance of their Leaders, and then be displeased with them for so doing; this were no less than to render them *evil* for *good*, and punish them for doing their duties. But he will be so far from excusing them, if upon their embracing and submitting to the doctrines and precepts of their Leaders, without examination or doubting, they fall into error and profaneness, that he will call them to an account, and punish them severely for it. Their obedience unto men shall not excuse their disobedience unto him. *Tannerus* indeed, according to his wonted orthodoxy and modesty, that he may the better persuade and encourage the people to follow their Teachers whither they please to lead them, affirms the clean contrary; but they had best take heed how they trust to such doctrine. As he will punish their Teachers for leading them into sin, so he will punish them for following them into it. According to that of our Saviour, *If the blind*

*Colloqu.
Ratif.
Sess. 9.*

*Mat. 18.
14.*

lead

- lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.* He will punish both the one and the other; the one for leading, the other for following; the one for deceiving, the other for being deceived. He will not only punish the deceiving Prophet, but him likewise that is deceived by him. *They shall bear* (saith he) *the punishment of their iniquity, the punishment of the prophet shall be even as the punishment of him that seeketh unto him:* that is, both the one and the other shall be guilty, and undergo the penalty justice shall assign them for the same. *Zimri shall not excuse Cosbi, nor Cosbi Zimri, but they shall both die together.* And it is a righteous thing with God, when people out of a slavish wilful credulity follow their Leaders into by-paths, to make them smart for it, and that for this reason, because he hath made sufficient provision to secure them against it. He hath told them, that notwithstanding their high office in the Church, yet they have in them some darkness, are liable to error, and upon that account hath warned them to hear them with caution, and to beware of being deceived by them. *Take heed* (saith Christ) *and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.* And he is so far from tying them up to their lips, that he do's in expresse terms charge them, when they require unlawful things to disobey them. *Hearken not* (saith he) *unto the words of the prophets that prophesie unto you.* And that they may know what things are lawful, and what are not lawful, he hath, as I have shewed, delivered his Word to them, commanding them to read and study it: and for their better understanding of it, he hath given them a
- com-

Ezek. 14.
10.

Num. 25.
8.

Mat. 16.6.

Jer. 23. 16.

competent measure of his Spirit, strictly charging them to keep to it, and not suffer themselves to be drawn away from it by any inducements or temptations whatsoever. Now if after all this they will yet shut their eyes, enslave themselves to their Leaders, and follow them into sinful courses, who will not look upon them as worthy to suffer? I may say to them in this case, as *David* did to *Saul's* souldiers, *As the Lord liveth, ye are worthy to die,*

1 Sam. 26,
16.

11. If they must submit to the dictates and precepts of their Leaders, meerly upon their authority, without any examination or tryal, then they must, as to the matter of obedience, give as much honour to them as to God himself. For when he is pleased to give forth his Laws, what greater honour can they give him, as to the yielding of obedience, than do what he enjoyns, meerly upon his authority, without enquiring after any other reason to authorize or oblige to it? And therefore I say, if they must submit to what is delivered by their Teachers, meerly upon their authority, without any examination or trial, they must in respect of the absoluteness of their obedience, give as much honour to them as to him. Now this he will not allow; for in all those duties we are to perform, which are common to men (as the objects thereof) with him, he still reserves to himself a peculiar preheminance, which we may neither withhold nor diminish without denying him his undoubted right. As to instance in faith; we must believe both God and men, but with this difference, that we must assent to what he
saith

faith *simpliciter*, meerly upon the credit of his own Word: but we must assent to what they say, only *secundum quid*, or so far as it is agreeable to what is delivered by him. In like manner we must obey both him and men, but with this difference, that we must obey him *absolutely* so far as he commands, but them with a *reserve*, that is, only so far as what they command, is agreeable to what is commanded by him. These are the bounds of the honour he allows us to give to men, and if we go any farther, we render them more than belongs to them, which we cannot do, but we shall intrench upon his right, and go against the Scripture, which forbids us to give His glory to another.

Is. 42.8.

12. The faithfull servants of God, out of the zeal they have born to the Truth and their own safety, have all-along from first to last, exercised a power of private discretion in matters of Religion, and that without any disallowance or contradiction, save what they have met with from the open Enemies of the Truth. Though the persons they have had to deal with, have been never so eminent either in Church or State; either for their authority or abilities, yet have they not captivated their Judgements to them, but have freely and boldly taken their Doctrines and Precepts under examination, and tryed them by the Rule; and so far as they have found them answerable to it, they have embraced them, and so far as they have found them repugnant, they have rejected them. And whiles they did thus, they judg'd they did no more, than what did

did as well consist, with the respect and duty they owed to them who were over them, as tend to their own necessary safety. When the King of Egypt required the *Midwives* to kill the *male children*; and when *Saul* commanded his Souldiers to slay the *Priests*; and when *Abab* will'd *Naboth* to let him have his *Vineyard*; and when *Nebuchadnezzar* enjoyned the three Children to worship his *Image*; and when *Darius* forbad *Daniel* to pray to *his God*; and when the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* urged the Disciples to *wash hands* before Meat, and when the *Jews* forbad the Apostles to *preach Christ*; they all exercised this judgement, doing, not what was required, but what they in their own private apprehensions and perswasions took to be their duty. And when *Paul* and *Silas* preached the Gospel to the *Bereans*, they took their Doctrine to the *Scriptures*, and tryed it thereby. They did not like a company of blinde, credulous Zealots, immediately receive it upon their recommendation, without any more ado, but like wise and sober men, that desired Truth rather than Novelty, they brought it to the Touch-stone, and made proof of it thereby. And this the *Holy Ghost* was so far from disliking that he commends them for it, nay bestows upon them a title of special honour, which he hath inserted in their story, to be read in all the Churches to their perpetual praise. And after this manner the Saints and Martyrs behaved themselves in after ages. They closed not with things upon the credit of those who delivered them to them, how eminent soever they were, but according

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Exo. 1. 16.

1 Sam. 22.

17.

1 Kings

21. 3.

Dan. 3. 18.

6. 10.

Mat. 15. 2.

Acts 4. 19.

Act 17. 11.

to the liberty allowed them by the great *Prophet* and *Law-giver*, they took them under *Examination*, and then judg'd of them and received them according to what they thereby found them.

13. That Christians may and ought to use a judgement of private *discretion*, in enquiring into those things which are offered to them, for their own information and satisfaction, do's appear from the testimony of the *Antients*, who have in their Writings plainly, and fully given their judgements concerning it. I know Truth, and especially such as that is we have now before us, shines with its own beams, and needs no testimony from men, yet because our adversaries in this, as well as in other cases, use to charge us with singularity and novelty, I shall a little enquire into what they have said in this particular. And I shall begin with *Clemens of Alexandria*, a man of polite and exquisite learning, who speaking on the present Theme, saith,

Strom. l. 7.

διακρίτεον τὴ καταλελειμένη θεωρίᾳ, καὶ κυριωτάτῃ λογισμῷ τὸ ἀληθὲς ἀπὸ τοῦ φαινομένου. *We must distinguish by serious meditation, and diligent reasoning, the Truth from that which appears to be so.* And a little after, speaking of the manner of the Christians of his times, he adds, *We believe not men absolutely affirming, to whom it is lawfull to affirm the contrary. It is not sufficient for them absolutely to say that which seems good to them, but it behoves them to prove that which they say. Neither do we expect the testimony which is given of men, but we prove that which is enquired after, by the voice of the Lord.* According to him then, there

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is not any mortal man of such credit, as that we should presently by a blinde, *Pythagorean* Faith assent to what he delivers, but we must call upon him for proof, and that out of the Holy Scriptures; and even then when he hath produced it, we must not presently submit, untill that by serious consideration and diligent reasoning, we have distinguished Truth from Error. And hence it was that *Origen* who was his Scholar, advised his Hearers, Diligently to attend, and receive the grace of the Spirit, from whom proceedeth the discerning of spirits, that so as good bankers they might observe when he taught Error, and when that which is pious and true. He would not have them to take all he delivered upon his Word, but as those that were both impowred, and qualified for the trying of Spirits, to use their own reason, and thereby observe when he was in the right, and when in the wrong. And herewith agrees that of *Lactantius*; It behoves (saith he) that in that wherein the reason of life consists, every man should rather trust himself, and rest on his own judgement, and his own senses, in finding out and weighing of the Truth, than going upon trust, (as one destitute of reason) be deceived by the errors of others. Wherefore since it is innate to all to be wise, that is, to seek the Truth, those bereave themselves of wisdom, that without judgement approve of the inventions of their Ancestors, Et more pecudum, and after the manner of Beasts are lead by others. In the business of Salvation he would have people to be serious, and to employ themselves in the study of Truth; and because men are subject to Error,

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*Hom. 2. in
Ezek.*

*Instit. l. 2.
c. 8.*

he thinks it not safe for them to rely upon them; and shews, that in his apprehension it is no better than to act like those that are destitute of reason, nay, to turn themselves into beasts, and therefore he will have them to use their own judgment and senses, and to rest on them. And answerable hereunto is that of Cyril Bishop of Jerusalem; *Believe me not (saith he) in whatsoever I shall simply deliver, unless thou shalt find the things which I shall speak demonstrated, in τῶν θείων γραφῶν, out of the divine Scriptures; for the safety of faith depends not on the eloquence of language, but on the proofs that are brought out of the divine Scriptures.* In which words he expressly dissuades us from taking things upon trust, and he renders a substantial reason for it, which is, that the establishment of faith hangs not upon the pretences or flourishes of men, but upon the Word of God, by which we must see every thing confirmed ere we give entertainment to it. And Ambrose Bishop of Millain, was so far from being against this liberty, that he declares himself pleased with such as made use of it. *Ego beneficio annuero, &c. I take it for a favour (saith he) when any one that readeth my Writings, giveth me account of what doubts he there meeteth with, first, because I may be deceived in those very things which I know. And besides, many things escape us; and some things sound otherwise to some, than perhaps they do to me.* He knew himself subject to Errors and Mistakes, and therefore he would have such as should read his Writings, to use their own Judgement, and when they

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met with any thing they doubted of, to make their Exceptions, which he professes he should be so far from looking upon as any kind of arrogancy, that he should take it as a kindness. And *Jerom*, writing of the Religious *Marcella*, saith, *Proem. in Epist. ad Galat. 1*
When I was at Rome she never met me so hastily, but she still asked me something concerning the Scriptures; neither did she; after the manner of the Pythagoreans, think, whatsoever I answer'd was right: neither did authority without reason satisfy her, sed examinabat omnia, & sagaci mente universa pensabat: but she examined all, and with a skilful mind weighed every thing; so that I took my self rather to have a judge of her than a learner. Though he were a man so eminent for his learning and piety, yet such was her discreet and holy caution, that she would not take things on the credit of his word; but sate her self, as it were, in judgment upon them, examined and weighed them; and he knowing it to be no more than her just and necessary liberty, allowed her in it, nay, commended her for it. Hereunto likewise belongs that of
Augustin Bishop of Hippo; I shall (saith he) impute it to my self, if upon the words of men, I yield to Error, and be seduced from the flock of Christ, especially since he hath admonished me, saying, My sheep hear my voice, and follow me. Let no man say to me, O what doth Donatus say; or what doth Parmenianus, or Pontius, or any other of them, quia nec Catholicis Episcopis consentiendum est, because we must not consent to the catholic Bishops themselves; if at any time it happen they be deceived. so as to hold any thing against the divine Scriptures. Wherein he teaches, that since Christ hath called

De Unit. eccl. c. 10.

Hom. in.
Mat. 24.

us to attend his voice, we must not leave him; that if upon the specious pretences and fair words of any, we should do it, we should be without excuse; that the most Catholick and Orthodox Bishops are lyable to mistakes; and that therefore we must not take what they or others say for Truth, till we have first try'd it by the Word, wherein the Voice of Christ sounds, and found it consonant thereunto. To these testimonies I shall only add that of Chrysostom, who descanting on those words of our Saviour, *When ye shall see the Abomination of Desolation, &c.* thus delivers himself: *When ye shall see impious heresie, which is the host of Antichrist, standing in the holy places of the Church, then, let those which are in Judea flee to the mountains: that is, let those which are Christians betake themselves to the Scriptures. But wherefore do's he command all Christians to betake themselves to the Scriptures? because in this time wherein heresie hath prevailed upon the Churches, there can neither be any proof of true Christianity, nor any other refuge of Christians, willing to know the truth of Faith, but the divine Scriptures. Before time it was manifested divers ways which was the Church of Christ, and which was Gentilism, but now it is known no way but by the Scriptures. The people then in time of prevailing heresie, must not stand waiting upon the lips of their Teachers, but must betake themselves to the Scriptures, which they are to look upon as their refuge, and make use of as the only sure Compass, they have at such a time to steer their course by. Were I minded to add more testi-*
monies

monies of this nature, *Colloquium Ratisbonense*, or *Davenant*, nay *Gratian*, to trouble no better friends, would plentifully supply me; but I suppose it is needless. Those I have already mentioned may suffice to shew you the difference betwixt the language of the godly Pastors of the *ancient* Church, and the present Masters of the *Roman* Synagogue. The *former* teach, that the people in matters of Religion must seriously examine and diligently consider things; the *latter* say, they must not stand to examine or consider, but must without any more ado assent and obey. The *former* say, they must not believe their Teachers any further than the reasons they bring along with them serve to convince and perswade them; the *latter* say, they must believe them upon their bare word, without any reason at all. The *former* say, they must use their own reason; and that acting otherwise they play the beasts; the *latter* say, they must not use it, but believe. The *former* say, the word of men, how wise or holy soever they are, is no good bottom for their Faith; the *latter* say, it is sufficient. The *former* commend such for their discretion as refuse to take up with the words of their Teachers when they carry not reason along with them; the *latter* censure and condemn them for so doing, as guilty of no less than incredulity and perverseness. The *former* teach, that they must not regard what men say, but what the Scriptures say; the *latter*, that they must not enquire what the Scriptures say, but what they say. The *former* teach, that the Scriptures are their only Refuge and Security; the *latter*, that the reading

of them is dangerous, and tends to no other than Heresie and confusion. And now I appeal to all persons that have the least grain of judgement and sincerity, whether the Ancients are for us or our adversaries; whether they are for the peoples trying the Doctrines of their Teachers or against it. He that hath the face to gainsay such clear testimonies as these, shall by my consent, as an obstinate enemy to truth and evidence, be left to dispute with himself, whether he be in his wits or no.

13. The case is so plain, that divers of the more grave and sober sort of the Papists themselves, concur with us, and plead for a power in the people to judge of Doctrines as well as we. Those of latter times judging it inconsistent with the honour of their Clergy and the safety of their Religion, which they maintain by keeping their people in ignorance, are utterly against it; but divers that lived in the ages past, before the mystery of Iniquity attain'd to its full stature, are peremptory for it, as a certain right belonging to them, without which they can neither act like reasonable creatures, nor make due provision for their own happiness. I shall instance in some few; and begin with *Aquinas*, the angelick Doctor, whose Judgement, amongst those against whom I now dispute is (to use the words of the Holy Ghost touching the Counsel of *Ahiabophel*) as if a man should enquire at the Oracle of God. Every one (saith he) is bound to examine his own actions, by the knowledge he hath of God, whether it be natural, acquired, or infused: *Omnis enim homo debet secundum rationem agere*, for every man

Vid. Davencant. in Col. 3. 23. p. 255.

man ought to do according to reason. Whereby it appears that notwithstanding his zeal and devotion to the See of Rome, yet he thought that every man should make proof of his own performances of what nature soever they are, whether enjoyn'd by Superiours or taken up of his own free choice, ere he set upon them, and that to proceed otherwise, is contrary to reason. To him I shall add the famous *Picus*, Earl of *Mirandula*, the Mirror of his time and Nation. If (saith he) doubtings do arise which of the differing parties do's more rest upon Evangelical Verity, the sentence must by no means be given precipitantly; but the Truth that commits it self to the mindes of the faithfull, is to be expected, *libro iudicio*, from a poised judgement, and in the mean time God is to be intreated for the discerning of spirits, and the holy Scriptures to be consulted. A passage so full against the Popish implicit faith, that I could wish it were engraven on all the doors and Pillars in Rome, that so they might see that that man, who was born, brought up, and so much admired amongst them, hath given his testimony against them. He would not have people be such fools, as to take things upon trust, but to weigh them in the ballance of their own private judgements, pray to God for direction, search the Scriptures, and then give sentence according thereunto. *Eud. Vives* is of the same minde: Diligence and enquiry (saith he) avail to the finding out of Truth, but slothfulness and negligence bring forth Error. If you neither enquire nor search concerning any matter, you will easily be deceived, but if you look and enquire into the causes and reasons, *Veritas sese pro-*

*De fide &
ord. cred.
Theor. 22.
p. 307.*

*De Verit.
lib. 1. 3.
p. 457.*

feret, the truth will shew it self. His opinion is, that careful and diligent enquiry into the grounds and reasons of things, is the ready way to discover and find out the truth; whereas a credulous slothfulness, that will rather take up with any thing than be at the pains of trial, leads to nothing but errors and mistakes. And indeed it is a thing so obvious, that had not men almost renounc'd their reason, it would be needless to produce testimonies to evince it. *Cornelius Agrippa* is very plain and full, *We ought (saith he) to examine all the disciplines of sciences, and all opinions, by the word of God, as the Lydius Lapis or touchstone thereof, and in all things flee unto it, seu ad solidissimam petram, as unto a most sure rock, and by it only judge of all opinions and ways.* He thinks it not safe for us to close with sciences and opinions as soon as they are offered to us, or upon the first view we take of them, as most do; but he would have us to prove and try them. And the touch-stone whereby we must do it, is the Word of God; we must not try them by carnal reason, humane authority, or any such deceitful thing, but we must take them to the Word, and try them by it, and by it solely, as being the onely sure rock our faith hath to rest upon. *Durand* speaks not without some indignation, *He that captivates (saith he) his reason to humane authority, incidit in insipientiam bestialem, falls into beastly folly.* And *Charron* speaks to the same purpose, *To go about (saith he) to deprive a man of this right, is to make him no more a man but a beast.* And if we ask *Silvester the Inquisitor*, he will tell us, that to interpret the precepts

*De vanit.
scient. c.
100. de
verb. dei.
p. 475.*

*Prefat. in
quæ. lib.
sistent.
of wisd. l.
2. c. 2. p.
218.*

*In verb.
scrupulus.*

of men by a judgment of discretion in the court of
 conscience, pertinet ad quemlibet pro facto suo,
 belongs to every one for his own practice. And to
 trouble you with no more, this was one thing
 that *Paulus Venetus Fulgentius*, and the other *Traët. de*
Venetian Divines, stood upon, That every man *Interdict.*
 might and ought to discern of every superiours pre- *Paul. 5.*
 cept, even the Popes himself, whether it were lawful
 and convenient, or no. Now do but observe what
 difference there is betwixt the doctrine of these
 men, and that of *Bellarmino* and such like; the
 former following the Scriptures, and treading
 the steps of the ancients, say, that the people
 may judge and try such things as in the business
 of Religion are tendred to them, before they
 close with them; nay, that in pursuance of their
 own safety, they ought to do it, and that if they
 do otherwise, they let go their necessary liberty,
 and do no less than turn beasts. The latter say,
 that they neither may nor ought to do it; that
 their business is to hear their Teachers, in doing
 whereof they provide sufficiently for their safety;
 and that to question what they deliver, is no
 other than needless scrupulosity and vain arro-
 gance. Whether of the two is in the right, I
 leave you to judge by what hath been spoken.

7. Having in these fore-going particulars
 evinced to you, that the people have the power
 of judging contended for, I shall in the next
 place shew you the lightness and vanity of those
 objections and pretences, that are made by *Tan-
 nerus, Valentia, Bellarmine*, and others, against it,
 which though I shall not mention either in their
 own words or order, yet I shall give you the

scope and sense of them. And they alledge,

Obj. 1. It is the pleasure of God, to whom it belongs to determine the rights and duties of men, that the people should consult their Teachers, and not like or dislike, chuse or refuse, as they themselves shall think meet, but as their Teachers shall instruct and direct them. *Deut.* 17. 8-12. *Mos.* 2. 7. *Mat.* 23. 2, 3.

Ans. That people ought in doubtful cases to consult their Ministers, and take instructions from them, these places evince, and we never denied it; but that either their Ministers should be infallible, or that they should assent to all they say as truth, or obey all they command as lawful, without exercising any private judgment for their own satisfaction, they afford no proof at all. As for those words, *They shall shew thee the sentence of judgment*, they are not (as *Davenant* notes) *verba promittentis sed mandantis*, words of promise, but of command; shewing not what the Priests would do, but what in pursuance of their office they ought to do. And shall we reason, *à jure ad factum*, from what they ought to do, to what they would do? what more ordinary than for men to neglect what they ought to do, and instead thereof do what they have a mind to do? But admit they were not words of command, but promise, yet were they not to be taken in an absolute sense, but *cum conditione annexa*, with a condition adjoyned, *viz.* if they should consult the Law, follow the direction of it, and teach according to it; then they should indeed give the sentence of judgment, otherwise not. This *Hart* acknowledges, and rejects the Rabbi's gloss upon

Deut. 17.
9.

De Jud.
c. 21. p.
123.

Reynolds
Conf. ch. 7.
div. 4. p.
262.

upon the place for *absolute* obedience, as absurd and foolish. As for those words, *The priests lips should keep knowledge*, the same answer may serve; they hold not forth what they *would* do, but what they *should* do. The holy Ghost was so far from intending to signify any unerring power in the priests by them, that he does in the very next words shew their liableness to mistake, and how lamentably they had even already done it, in departing from that rule they were appointed to walk by. *Ye are departed* (saith he) *out of the way, ye have caused many to stumble at the law, ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi — Ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in my Law.* And is it then to be imagined that he took these to be infallible, or that he would have the people to believe all that they said, or do all that they required? In like manner, when our Saviour saith, *The scribes and pharisees sit in Moses seat*; Mar. 23. 2. his meaning is not that they did orthodoxly, sincerely and truly expound the Law, but that it was their office and duty to do it. And whereas the holy Ghost does in these several places require the people to betake themselves to the priests, hear them and observe them, his meaning is not that they should do it in all things, without exception, but onely when they taught according to the Law, which they were appointed to expound and interpret. As for instance, the Scribes and Pharisees taught, that our Saviour was a deceiver, and forbad the people to confess him; now I demand whether they were bound to believe and obey them herein, yea or no? If they were, then they were bound to believe a lie,

Mar. 27.

63.

Joh. 9. 22.

lie, gain say the truth, and undo their souls. If not, then these words are to be taken in a limited sense, which is the thing contended for. The sum of all then is this, That it is the duty of Ministers to teach the truth, and require nothing but what is according to Scripture; which so long as they do, the people are to believe and obey them; but when they do otherwise, they must neither believe nor obey them.

Obj. 2. There is a belief due to all men in their own profession; we believe Lawyers, Physicians, &c others, even when we do not understand them: Religion therefore being in a peculiar manner the profession of Ministers, in the study whereof they have employed themselves all along, it seems to be no more than reasonable that private persons should rather confide in them, than rely upon their own judgments.

Answer. 1. There are some private persons, who though they profess not Law, Physick, or any such faculty, yet by their study and industry have attained to such skill in them, that they are able to instruct many that do; and that these either believe or ought to believe such as do profess them in all they say, without so much as enquiring after the grounds they proceed on, none will affirm. *2.* The reason wherefore the people do commonly believe such as profess these faculties upon their bare word, is not because they may not exercise a judgment of discretion towards what they deliver, but because they are utterly unstudied in such matters, and so are unable to do it. But it is not so with them in the business of Religion; for as the knowledge of

of it is more attainable than the knowledge of other faculties; (I mean so much as is necessary to salvation) so they look upon themselves as more concern'd in it, and upon that account take more pains in the study of it. 3. There is a great deal of difference to be put betwixt the things of the world, and the things of religion and salvation; in the former, people may go upon trust, and content themselves with uncertain probabilities; but in the latter, they must, as the Scripture shews, make *sure work*. Were salvation as frivolous a thing as those of the world are, they might better venture upon humane authority; but being it is a matter of such high importance, they must, as I say, make *sure work*, not resting until they have attained to a well-grounded certainty, and such as may support them in an hour of temptation. Now how can they do this, while they take things upon trust, and that from those who are subject to error as well as themselves?

Joh. 6. 69.

2 Pet. 1.

10.

Obj. 3. But the common people, for the most part, are so ignorant, that they know little or nothing what belongs to Religion, and therefore it is not fit, that when Teachers in pursuance of their office have delivered to them doctrine and precepts, they should have liberty to judge them.

Ans. 1. There be few worthy the name of Christians so ignorant, but they are *pro modulo suo*, in some competent measure able to do it, at least in all things of necessity to salvation. Nothing is more certain than that many private persons do in knowledge, understanding, judgment, and other abilities, far exceed their Teachers;

*Prolegom.
in Evangel.*

Teachers; and many amongst the common people have possess'd the truth, and stoutly defended it, when their Teachers have either been ignorant of it, or forsaken it. Divers of our adversaries themselves (as *Tostatus* shews) hold, that from the time of *Christs* suffering, until his resurrection, *sides in sola remansit beatâ Virginâ*, the faith remain'd in the blessed *Virgin* alone. So that according to them, though she were a weak and frail woman, one of that sort, which is the most ignorant as well as timorous; yet she stuck to the truth, when her Teachers had acquiesced and forsaken it. But to admit that some be altogether unable to exercise such a judgment, must their inability destroy the liberty and privilege of others? Some want eyes, must not those therefore who have them use them? Some have no understanding, must those therefore who are endued with it be dealt with as if they were in the same condition? that is unreasonable.

Obj. 4. But to allow all that will to judge the doctrines and decrees of their Teachers, is the way to confusion; this is it that fills the Church with endless disputes: whereas if they would acquiesce in what they deliver, all would be in peace.

Ans. 1. There is not any liberty or privilege belonging to any order or degree of persons in the Church, nay, in the world, but through the depravation of mans nature it is capable of being abused, and made serviceable to bad ends and purposes; which yet is no sufficient reason wherefore it should be thought unlawful, or being thought lawful should be abolished and laid

laid aside. Kings and Princes have an undoubted liberty of exercising civil policy and government over their people, and is there any Nation in the world that cannot witness it hath been abused to arbitrariness and tyranny? and yet our adversaries will not say that this is a sufficient reason wherefore it should either be thought unlawful, or laid aside. And if the liableness of Kings and Princes to abuse the liberty they have to govern their people, be no sufficient reason wherefore it should be thought unlawful, or being thought lawful, be laid aside; then wherefore should the liableness of the people to abuse the liberty they have to judge doctrines, be look'd upon as a sufficient reason, wherefore it should either be thought unlawful, or being thought lawful should be laid aside? 2. God knows how to frame a Charter for his Church without any direction from men; and therefore since he hath (as I have already shew'd) granted the people such a liberty, those who are over them should, without any gain-saying, allow it them, let the issue be what it will. He fore-saw from the beginning, when he sat in counsel about this liberty, the inconveniences as well as the conveniences that would attend it, which yet he look'd not upon as any sufficient reason wherefore he should with-hold it from them. And if he thought not the inconveniences which he fore-saw a sufficient reason, wherefore he should, before he had granted it, with-hold it from them; much less should men, how great or eminent soever, think the inconveniences, which they find attending it, a sufficient reason wherefore

fore they should withhold it, after he hath granted it to them. 3. Admit God had not granted this liberty, yet common prudence, notwithstanding the inconveniences pretended, would have prompted the people to claim and exercise it. For where inconveniences do occur on both sides, the less are still to be chosen; and sure it's a far less evil for the people to labour under some disputes, which God often-times over-rules for his Churches good, than that they should follow their Teachers into error, heresie and profaneness; nay, into Hell it self, which they must needs expose themselves to the certain danger of, unless they maintain and exercise this liberty. But 4. If Implicit Faith be such a notable Antidote against divisions, how comes it to pass, that our adversaries, who urge it with so much severity, have so many amongst them, which all the *Magick* of the *Papal* Chair cannot conjure down? Whence is it that their Bells do in the hearing of all *Christendome*, ring such clamorous and angry discords? Whence came the difference betwixt the *Dominicans* and *Franciscans*, about the *immaculate* Conception of the Virgin *Mary*; betwixt the *Jansenists* and *Molinists* about *Grace*; betwixt the *Italian* and *French* Papists about the *head* of the Church? If blinde obedience be such a notable means to maintain unity, and secure the peace, how comes it thus to pass, that they have such diversity of Opinions amongst them, agitated with so much heat and vehemency, that they are every day thundering out their *Anathema's* against each other? I know they perswade their deluded followers, that

that all the differences are amongst the *Protestants* (which they tell them arise from our suffering the people to read the *Scriptures*, exercise this liberty of *judging*, and the like) but as for them there is nothing but unity and peace; there is not so much, as the *noise* of an *hammer*, or any jarring to be heard amongst them. But this is so notoriously false, that there is not any save those who are as ignorant as their people whom they keep in such Lamentable darkness and bondage, but they know the contrary.

Obj. 5. If the people may call in question the definitions and conclusions of their Teachers, then they may *judicare judices*, judge their Judges, which is contrary to reason, and inconsistent with that Order God hath set up and established in the World.

Ans. Though it be granted that their Teachers may in some respects be termed their *Judges*, yet they may notwithstanding, without offering any injury to Reason or Order, call in question what they deliver to them. For the understanding whereof you must note, there is a twofold Judgement. 1. There is *judicium forense*, a publick Judgement, which belongs to those who have Authority and Jurisdiction over others, by virtue whereof they may make Constitutions and Decrees for the directing and regulating of their practice. 2. There is *judicium rationale*, a private Judgement; and this belongs to every individual person, who is indued with a power of judging the Decrees of the highest Court on Earth, *quantum ad se spectant*, so far as

See Voetius
polit. eccl.
p. 1. l. 2.
tract. 3. c.
3. p. 897.

as they belong to him, and concern his own particular duty. The difference betwixt these two Judgements lies in this; in the former a man judges, *propter alium*, for the direction of others: in the latter *propter se*, for the ordering of his own duty. Now if the people should take upon them the former of these, they would indeed do that which is contrary to the rules of Reason and Order, but their taking upon them the latter, is no more contrary thereunto, than is their opening of their eyes, that they may see their way as they go in the streets. In exercising this Judgement upon the Decrees of their Superiours, if they find them according to the rule, they close with them, if not, they decline them; yet withall submit to the penalty of their disobedience. And what is there in this contrary to Reason or Order? *This is not* (as Cappellus shews) *to overthrow good Order, or introduce into the Church any confusion, but to maintain the right and liberty planted in the heart of man by Nature it self, namely, that none be compelled to renounce his Reason, and contrary to the dictate thereof by a blinde and brutish motion, to follow and embrace whatsoever it shall please certain men out of meer humour to command, adversus perfectissimam omnis veri justitiae & equi normam, against the most perfect rule of truth, righteousness and equity, namely the Word of God contained in the sacred Scripture.* This is certainly the course that the faithfull servants of God have observed all along under the several powers they have had to do with; and if ever we mean to be found faithfull we must do the like.

*Ihes. Salm.
de sum.
Jud. sect.
49. p. 120.*

But

Obj. 6. But in all well govern'd Commonwealths, it is thought fit, that Subjects should submit to the sentence of the Magistrates that bear rule therein, without contradiction or censure; and if so, why should not the people in like manner submit to the sentence of their Teachers?

Ans. It is usual with our adversaries in this controversie to confound publick and private Judgement; and hence it is that most of their arguments are nothing at all to the purpose. The Judgement we contend for, is a *private, rational, discretive* Judgement, allowed by God for the directing of every man in his own particular practice. That which they mainly dispute against, is a *publick, ministerial, authoritative* Judgment serving to determine and limit others, which we never challeng'd to any private person, how well qualified soever. And this they seem to understand when they say, that in all well ordered Common-wealths, it is thought fit that Subjects should submit to the sentence of the Magistrate; else they speak most falsely, and belye the World; for there is not any Commonwealth therein, that is indeed well ordered, but they allow their Subjects to read, study, and judge of the sense and equity of their Laws, for their own private use, and to do otherwise is to deal with them rather like Beasts than Men. Besides, it were absurd for Magistrates to direct commands against those actions of men which fall not under their observation and cognizance. Now the private judging of their sentence is a thing of this Nature (for after they have done

all they can, their subjects will judge of it as they shall finde it by the light of their own reason, and they be never the wiser) and therefore it seems not to be proper for them, to deliver commands against it. And thus I have given you an answer to the most material objections, our adversaries urge against us in this particular. Some others they have, but what I have already alledg'd will supply with answers; and therefore I shall not spend more time in making particular returns to them.

8. Lest any should take occasion from what hath been said, to misinterpret the Apostle, or conceive that to be meant by him which he never intended, I shall here, before I enter upon the Uses, propound somewhat by way of *caution*.

1. Though he thought it not convenient that we should receive the Doctrine of our Teachers, till we have first made proof of it, yet we must not think that this do's evacuate or make void their function. The imperfections and infirmities that attend them in their Ministrations, do not nullifie their Office, no more than those that attend the Magistracy do nullifie it; but rather serve to set forth the wisdom and power of God, that can by such weak and despicable Instruments, accomplish such high and eminent effects; that can by such broken Vessels convey the Oyl of Grace into the hearts of his chosen. Their calling and work determine not with every Error, they may through ignorance or inadvertency be guilty of, but are to continue throughout all Generations. They are entrusted
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and that solely (unless some *extraordinary* case occur) with the dispensation of perpetual Ordinances; they are under perpetual Promises; the Churches necessity of them will be perpetual; the removal of them is threatned as one of the sorest Judgements that can befall a people; all which, with many other particulars that might be mentioned, do plainly shew, it is the pleasure and design of God that their Office shall be perpetual, that is, continue to the end of the World. However things go, yet Christ will keep up a Ministry in his Church, that shall remain untill he have *perfected* his *Saints*, and shall *deliver up the Kingdom to his Father*.

Mal. 28.
20.

1 Cor. 11.
26.

Acts 8. 30.
Rev. 2. 5.

Eph. 4. 12.

1 Cor. 15.

24.

2. Though he forbid us to rest upon their authority, yet he would not have us to forsake them, and over-run their Ministry. Their being lyable to mistakes do's not disoblige us from *attending* on them, and hearing them, but from *confiding* in them; and that in such a degree, as to take whatever they say for truth, without enquiring any further. His admonishing us to prove what they deliver, do's not forbid the hearing them, but suppose it, nay, command and enjoyn it; for how could he think we should be able or fit to bring their Doctrine to tryall, and pass our Judgement upon it, unless we be present, and hear it? This I speak of such as are *lawfull* Ministers of the Gospel, and *answer* the end of their Calling; as for *intruders* and *usurpers* that neither regard their *own*, nor *others* souls, I have nothing to say for them.

3. Though he be against our making them Lords of our Faith, yet he would not have us

to slight them, or carry our selves irreverently or contemptuously towards them. No, he will have us, (as you may see in the preceding verses) *to know them, and esteem them very highly in love for their works sake.* And he still gives it in charge to those to whom he either preaches or writes, that they be mindfull of their Teachers, look upon them as the Ministers of the Gospel, and yield them such respect as may encourage them to the cheerfull discharge of their duty, and the laying out of themselves for their good. Admit our Teachers be guilty of mistakes in Doctrine, and miscarriages in Life, yet we must remember they are the *Ambassadors* of Christ, whom he hath entrusted with the Ministry of *reconciliation*, and as such we are both to receive and respect them.

4. Though he call upon us to prove what they deliver, and satisfie our selves concerning the lawfulness of it, ere we entertain it, yet he do's not mean that we must take nothing at all upon trust from them. In those things wherein we have no reason to suspect them either of weakness or falshood, or wherein we are altogether uncapable of making a Judgement our selves, we not only may but ought to trust them, as the best security we have to rest upon. Such as are wholly illiterate are to believe it is a Bible wherein the Minister reads, and that he reads true and not false; and such as have attain'd further, are to believe, that the Bible wherein he reads is rightly translated out of the Originals; that the Copies were authentick out of which the Translation was made; that

(as credible Authors mention) there were such things done in ages past, and such customs and observations among the *Jews*, and other Nations, which do greatly serve to the clearing of many dark places of Scripture, nay, which are so necessary to be known, that without acquaintance with them, many places cannot be understood. Herein as we trust our Lawyers and Physicians, so we must them; not but that we may, if we have ability and opportunity, enquire into those things our selves, or if we have reason to suspect our own Teachers, consult with others; but that in case we want ability and opportunity, or have no reason of suspicion, we then may and ought to trust them, as the best light and security we have. We must distinguish betwixt matters of *doctrin*, and matters of *fact*; or betwixt *doctrins*, and such things as are *subservient* thereunto. To believe the *former* upon the credit of our Teachers, is to resolve our faith into *humane* testimony; but to believe the *latter*, such as the trueneſs of Copies or Translations, upon their word, is no more a resolving of our faith into *humane* testimony, than the Apostles believing what they saw with their eyes, resolved their faith into *sense*.

5. Though he enjoyns us to *prove all things*, yet he would not have us to run after every new light, or hear every one that of his own accord, without any just call, shall take upon him to preach to us: this he was so far from either commanding or allowing, that by the spirit of prophesie, foretelling the disorders and miscarriages some Christians should be guilty of

2 Tim. 4.
3.

in after ages, he mentions this as one, that *having itching ears, they should hearken to themselves teachers*: and what is the issue of it? why, forsaking the truth, they turn unto fables. And what he foretold, we our selves see abundantly accomplished in our days; for such is the indiscretion and levity of people, that they are ready to go forth at the shaking of every reed, answer the call of every Bell, and sit down at the feet of every one that hath the confidence to open his mouth to them. What is this but (as Calvin well notes upon the Text) *ad omnes errorum ventos, se temere exponere*, rashly to expose themselves to all the winds of errors, which out of a due sense of their own frailty they should carefully shun and avoid. For a man to forsake his own Teacher, and the wholesome food he is inured to, and hath by the blessing of God happily grown under, and run after strangers, is no other than to tempt God to deliver him up to delusions, and encourage Impostors in their work.

6. Though he would have us to try things ere we close with them, yet he would not have us turn *Academicks* or *Scepticks*, call in question received principles, and doubt of every thing which comes before us; that is to run from one extreme into another, dissolve the very fabrick of Religion, and put an absolute stop to the duty and service we owe to God. As we must not believe all things, so neither must we doubt of all things, but we must walk in a mean betwixt these two extremes. As for new matters, we must first try them, and then if we see cause, maintain them; but for old, standing, tried points,

points, that have clear foundation in Scripture, and which we have upon good grounds received long ago, we must rather maintain than try them. The Apostles advice is, that what is new and doubtful that we should *try*; and what we have tried and found good, that we should *hold fast*.

9. Having thus handled the *doctrinal* part of this discourse, and therein shewed what is meant by *proving*, *what* is to be proved, *who* are to make this proof, what it is *by* which it must be made, after what *manner* it must be manag'd; given you some *arguments* for it, answered the *objections* against it, and propounded some *cautions*: I shall now pass to the *Uses*, and therein shew how far this point concerns the world at this day, and what improvement is to be made of it.

And 1. If Christians must *prove all things*, then it may serve for the *confutation* and *conviction* of all those proud Masters, who deny the people have any liberty allowed them by God to try the doctrines and prescriptions of their Superiours. Of this sort are the Jewish *Rabbies*, the Mahometan *Priests*, the Popish *Prelates*, with some others, who think the people are so far in subjection to them, that they ought to receive their determinations and impositions, let them be what they will, without any scruple or exception whatsoever. They take themselves to be no less than absolute Lords, and therefore as they look upon it as their work to teach and command, so they look upon it as the peoples work to believe and obey; and upon their re-

Use 1.

fulsing to do it, they presently fall upon them and persecute them, as rebellious against good order and government, and upon that account worthy of the greatest severity that can be inflicted on them. Now what horrible tyranny
 1 Pet. 5.3. and cruelty is this? what lording it is this *over Gods heritage*? how contrary to the light of nature and common reason? how dissonant to the doctrine of the Prophets and Apostles, and in particular to that of Paul in this place, *prove all things,*

Use 2. 2. If Christians must *prove all things*, then it may be useful by way of *information*, to acquaint us, 1. what respect we are to shew to the doct^{rs} and precepts of such as dispense the Gospel to us. We must not look upon all their words as Oracles, proceeding from an infallible spirit; but we must receive them with suspicion, as coming from those that have darkness in them as well as light, and so may speak error as well as truth. We must not, like *Herod's* flattering hearers, as soon as they speak, cry out, it is *the voice of God and not of a man*; but out of the respect we bear, both to the truth and our own safety; we must take what they say to the rule, examine it thereby, and then judge of it according to the agreement it hath therewith. We must indeed be peaceable and charitable, yet we must not put out our eyes, or hood-wink our selves, and so like a company of blind fools and idiots, suffer men to lead us whither they please, but whiles we have eyes we must make use of them for our necessary direction and security. That we must reverence such as are our Teach-

ers is granted, yet we must not think that Christ is every where, he is said to be; or that every one speaks truth that pretends to it: but we must try, and then conclude as we find cause. The Apostle indeed discoursing of charity, saith, *it believeth all things*; but we must not think his meaning is, that we should be so charitable as to give credit to impostors, or assent to what ever is delivered to us; then we must believe the *Jews*, when they tell us, that the Gospel, which he took so much pains in preaching, is a meer fable; but that we should be so charitable as not to reject things out of prejudice, or groundless dislike, or with-hold our assent when we have no cause or reason for it. If upon due examination of those points which are delivered to us we find they have no foundation in the Word, we may without any violating of charity, or falsifying the Apostles doctrine in the least, not onely with-hold our assent from them, but reject them with indignation and contempt.

2. If Christians must *prove all things*, then Religion is no trivial business, but such as calls for skill, care and diligence. Carnal men, that know little of the nature of it, look upon it as a plain, easie, homely thing, that hath little intricacy in it: but it is not so; it hath that in it, that will find work for the ablest parts and greatest diligence. As it is a most desirable and honourable, so it is a most ingenious and accurate thing to be a sound, well princip'd, sincere Christian. There are in it many deep mysteries to be div'd into, many intricate cases to be resolved, many temptations both from within and without to be with-

1 Cor. 13.

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Luke 18.
26.

withstood, which no such things as ignorance, carelesnes or slothfulness are fit to encounter with. He that will be a right Christian, and faithfully perform his Masters work, must have a good eye, use circumspection and take pains, else he will never attain the ends he aims at. The Disciples gathered from the discourse of our Saviour concerning rich men, that it was an hard matter to be *saved*. And if it be an hard matter to be saved, then it must needs be an hard matter to be a Christian, in as much as a man must necessarily be so ere he can be saved. But if all other things were silent, the point we have before us would evince it: for if a man, in order to his being a Christian, must prove all those things he hath to do with in the business of Religion, before he close with them, and must accurately distinguish betwixt good and bad, taking the one and leaving the other, (as you have heard he must) then it must needs be an hard thing to be a Christian.

Use 3.

3. If Christians must *prove all things*, then it may serve for *reproof* to two sorts of persons.

1. To all such as are *Teachers*, more especially Popish *Prelates*, with such as comply with them, and do not allow the people this liberty, but urge doctrines and precepts upon them with as much peremptoriness and severity, as if they thought their bare word were sufficient to satisfy their peoples consciences, and legitimate whatsoever they shall judge meet to offer to them. *Bellarmino* makes mention of one *Abbot*, that enjoyn'd a *Monk* at his command to enter into a *flaming furnace*; and of another that enjoyn'd a *Monk* at his

2. 2. l. 2.
c. 21. p.
166.

his command to cast himself upon *the waters*. And there are multitudes surviving of the same spirit, who impose what they please upon the people over whom they are, without allowing them liberty to make proof thereof, though it be but in order to the directing of their own particular practice. Now, *Sirs*, what mean you thus to afflict the heritage of the Lord, vex your poor people, and trample them under your feet? Wherefore do you thus blind-fold and enthrall them, not suffering them to exercise the power and freedom belonging to them, when as it is so evident, that it is the pleasure of *Jesus Christ*, who knows better how to teach and govern his Church, than either men or Angels can tell him that they should do? Is this to imitate your Lord and Master, who exercised so much mildness and tenderness towards the people he had to deal with, who was so ready upon all occasions to dispense with their infirmities, comply with their weaknesses, resolve their doubts, satisfy their scruples, and clear up his truth to them? Is this to *gather the lambs in your arms, carry them in your bosom, and deal gently with those that are with young*? Is this, with the Apostles, to be *gentle among them, even as a nurse cherisheth her children*? Is this the way to make them thrive in knowledge, grace and holiness? Is this the way to render your feet *beautiful*, and make those over whom you are in love with you? Or is it not rather the way to make them weary both of you and your Ministry, and cause them with the rest of the Creation to *groan and travel*, that they may be delivered from

Isa. 40. 11.

1 Thes. 2.

Isa. 52. 7.

Rom. 8.

21, 22.

Oper. 1. 2.
P. 375.

from the bondage wherein they are, into the liberty of the children of God? For this very thing (as Luther told you long ago) you deserve *tanquam lupi & tyranni, as wolves and tyrants to be driven out of the Church of God.* But I shall sum up what I have to say to you, into a few *Queries*, which I shall offer to your consideration. 1. Hath God any where given you power to exercise this rigour towards your people? If you think he hath, tell us where and how to reconcile it, with that liberty which he hath, as I have shewed, granted to them. If he hath not, how dare you claim it, or make use of it? Do you not acknowledge your selves to be under his dominion? must you not be accountable for all to him? How dare you then do that which you have not warrant for from him? 2. Whether do you take your selves to be infallible? If you do, let us know upon what ground you do it, and how you came to be so. The whole world sighes and groans under errors and mistakes, and therefore you must not think it much if we look for good evidence from you, ere we acknowledge you to have any such priviledge. If you do not, then how dare you be so confident of your own opinions, as to urge them with such severity upon others, who perhaps have as much, if not more reason, to be as confident of their own? 3. Whether do you think you may justle up your Maker, and challenge the same power over your people that he himself does? If you may, communicate your reasons, and shew how it comes about that you may do that which Angels tremble at the thoughts of. If not, then
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with what Justice can you require your people to yield you absolute assent and obedience, and punish them for refusing? What can God himself do more, than require them to believe and obey him upon the authority of his bare word? and what do you in this your rigid behaviour towards them, less? 4. Whether may you fall

in with *Antichrist* and do his work? If you may, then wherefore do you pretend to disown him and be against him? If not, how will you ever defend this your imperious dealing with the people? Certainly, if there be any thing in the World, that incroaches upon the Prerogatives and rights of the Son of God, and breaths forth down right *Antichristianism*, this is it. 5. Whether are you to rule your People as you rule Beasts, and expect obedience upon the same

See Ames
Bell.

Enerv. l. 1.

P. 241.

terms, from the one, as you do from the other? If you are, then tell us for what end God endued them with reasonable souls, and placed them so near the Angels? If not, then wherefore do you require obedience, without allowing them to judge of the nature and equity of that you demand from them? wherein do you deal worse with Beasts? 6. Whether would you be content that others should deal with you, as you deal with them? If you would, then before you appear any more in the World, go and learn to be men. If not, then wherefore do you exercise such severity towards the people, since the very light of Nature teaches you not to do unto others, what you would not have them to do unto you? What is this but to tempt us to think you are of the race of the *Scribes* and

Mat. 23. 4. and *Pharisees*, who laid those *burdens* upon *others* that they would not endure to bear any part of *themselves*? Let the consideration of these things soften your hearts towards your people, and prevail with you to allow them the liberty belonging to them. But if you refuse notwithstanding all that can be said, to do it, know that he who is the Protector of the Innocent, will in time deliver them out of the hands of such Oppressors.

2. It may be likewise usefull by way of reproof to such among the *people* as take all upon trust from their Teachers, believe all they say, and do all they require. There are many who instead of standing up for and maintaining their undoubted and necessary liberty, do out of an unmanly, servile fear, bow down before them, and enslave their Reason, Judgement, Consciences, and all to them. Now, Sirs, wherefore do you thus despise the bounty of God, and slight the rich purchase of *Jesus Christ* your Saviour? Wherefore do you thus let go the liberty he hath required you to stand fast in, and give up your selves to the wills of unreasonable men? what is this but to intitle your selves to the doom of

Gen. 49.
14.

Issachar, and like so many *Asses* couch down under your *burdens*? What is this but to tell the World that you are neither Men, nor expect the Priviledges belonging to them, but that you are Beasts, and are content to be taught, govern'd and dealt with accordingly, than which what can be more unbecoming your reasonable Natures, or the Gospel which you do profess? But in compliance with the method of the former

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mer Branch of this Use, I shall sum up what I have to say to you in a few *Queries*. 1. Whether do you in good earnest think that the bare word of your Teachers is a sufficient bottom for you to ground your Faith upon, and such as you may with chearfulness and satisfaction acquiesce in? If you do, shew us what grounds you have for it. Both Scripture and Experience tell us, they labour under much darknes and ignorance, and are subject to errors and mistakes. If you do not, wherefore do you lay such stress upon it, as to venture the glory of God, and the peace and happiness of your Souls thereon? These are things of such importance, that you should provide better security for them than the word of any mortal man can be. 2. Whether do you think Christ will look upon this your believing and doing all that your Teachers would have you, without any examination and tryall, as a due answer to all those Cautions and Warnings he hath given you to beware of letting men *deceive you*? If you do, then tell us what it is to be credulous, secure and negligent; wherein it consists, who they be that are guilty of it, and when it is that men expose themselves to the danger of being deceived. If you do not, then why do you not awake and reform, and by due examination and tryall of things provide better for your own safety? 3. Whether may you take to your selves other Masters besides Christ, become their servants, and pay homage and obedience to them? If you may, then shew us what the Scripture means, when it saith, *One is your Master, even Christ, and all*
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Mat. 23 8. *ye are Brethren. And, be not ye the servants of men.*

1 Cor. 7. If you may not, then wherefore do you grant

23. such Magisterial power to your Teachers, suffer them to give Laws to your Consciences, and receive their Assertions as the very Dictates of Christ himself? What is it for one to make a man his Master, but (as *Pythagoras* his Scholars dealt with him) to receive his Documents meere-ly upon the credit and authority of his word; without enquiring any further? And when you give up your selves to the command of your Teachers, and look upon all they say as truth, and all they command as duty, without making any proof or tryall, what do you less?
4. Whether is it wisdom to be at an uncertainty in the business of Religion? If it be, wherefore do's the Holy Ghost spend so many words in exhorting us to make things *sure*? If it be not, then wherefore do you build upon the sandy foundation of the doctrines and commandments of men, for whom it is as ordinary to erre, as it is for the Starrs to twinkle, or the Clocks to miss the hour of the day?
5. Whether do you mean to hold out in Religion? If you do not, wherefore do you make a profession of it? do you think it worth the while to mock God, and dishonour the Gospel? If you do, then wherefore do not you satisfie your selves better concerning the truth of it, than by taking the Word of men? you know Religion hath ever met with opposition, and so it is like to do still, and therefore if you mean to hold out, you had best get better evidence for the truth of it, than the word of a frail man

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can be. So long as the voice of the Countrey goes for it, there's no great danger of forsaking it, but what will you do when all are against it, nay, when you shall see more against it than ever you saw for it? Now the great and learned, and all the people are for it, which perhaps is the ground whereon you have clos'd with it, but what will you say, if you see them all against it, nay and carried forth with greater zeal against it, than ever they were for it? It may be Religion for the present is your Interest, but what will you say to it when it will be your undoing, when it will lead you to prison and to death? Do you think the bare word of your Teachers that perhaps disclaim all that ever they said before, will bear you up? Do not persuade your selves it will. It may be even now upon your meeting with some small tryalls, you begin to stagger and shake, what then will you do, when you shall come to encounter with Gibbets and Flames? If you *run with the Foot, and they weary* you, *how will you contend with horses?* and if you are not able to abide the still-flowing streams, what will you do with *the swellings of Jordan?*

6. Whether do you think, if out of observance to your Teachers you follow them into Error, they shall answer for you? If you do, you lie under a gross mistake, for the Apostle tells us in plain terms, that *every one of us shall give account of himself to God.* Its true, they shall in a sort answer for you, but not with any advantage to you. Their being accessary to your delusion and ruine will implead themselves, but not excuse you, who were warn'd to prove what

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Jer. 12. 5

Rom. 12.

12.

they should deliver to you, and follow them no further than they should bear the light of the Word before them, which if you had done you had been safe, but doing otherwise you must look to perish. If you think they must not answer for you, then wherefore do you make their will your rule, and prostitute your Faith and Obedience to their pleasure? Wherefore do you follow them with so much boldness and security? Do you think it a small matter to run your selves into snares, and arm divine Vengeance against you? Have a care what you do, and be not so merciless and injurious to your Souls. And thus I have given you the Queries I thought fit to offer to you, which if upon due consideration you finde weight in, you may improve them for your direction; if otherwise, enjoy your thoughts, but withall beware, lest you be found rebellious against the light, and enemies to your own safety.

Job 24. 13.

4 Use.

If Christians must prove all things, then it may likewise be usefull by way of Exhortation to all you who are private Christians, to set upon the practice of it. As ever you will endeavour your own welfare, improve the liberty Christ hath bestowed on you, and evidence your selves to be men, receive not things upon trust, but by prudent and serious enquiry, inform your selves of the nature, equity and soundness of them ere you close with them. Take heed of being drawn into the Error so expressly condemned by the Apostle, of having mens persons in admiration, or suffering your selves to be twayed and overruled by them. Let them be what they will,

Jud. v. 16.

in respect of birth, parts, place, wealth, honour, power, interest, or any such like worldly advantages, yet do not captivate your Faith, Consciences or Reason to them, but by your own personal enquiry, satisfie your selves in whatever you undertake or do, preferring Truth from the meanest before Error from the greatest. Such was the integrity of Panormitan, a famous Lawyer, who lived about 230 years ago; that he said, *Laico verum dicenti cum Evangelio magis credendum, quam consilio falsum dicenti contra Evangelium*, a Lay man speaking truth with the Gospel, is to be believed before a whole Council, speaking false against it. You must not measure Doctrines and Opinions, by the quality of the persons delivering them, but by the evidence accompanying them. It is not worldly greatness that can make Error Truth, or Worldly meanness that can make Truth Error, but when all is done, Error will be Error, and Truth will be Truth. And therefore let not the pompous and splendid condition, wherein at any time you finde Error, cause you to esteem or embrace it as Truth; nor the despicable and low condition wherein you finde Truth, cause you to dislike or decline it as Error, but waving all such outward considerations, give both the one and the other the respect belonging to them. A Pearl though lying in the dirt, is of far more value, than a Pebblestone in the richest Cabinet: And the like is to be said concerning Truth; it is of more worth in the plainest and homeliest dress, than Error in all its paint and garnish. The head of Truth is worthier your respect under a Crown of thorns,

Tit. de elect. C. significat.

than the head of Error under a Crown of Gold. And therefore notwithstanding all the ignominy and contempt that foolish and ungodly men may cast upon it, suffer not your selves to be wrought out of conceit with it, but yield unto it its deserved esteem.

Now that you may manage this tryall of things, with more advantage and success, and be the better able to distinguish betwixt Truth and Error, and pass a just sentence, forbearing to use any more words to press you to the work, I shall in the next place propound some *rules* to direct you in it. And here I shall not insist upon those which our Writers prescribe in order to the due Interpretation of the Scripture, such as the consulting the scope of the Text, comparing one place with another, adhering to the Analogy of Faith laid down in the Creeds and Confessions of the Churches, with such like, which yet are very worthy your observation, but shall pitch upon such as are more particular, and as I conceive more suitable to the present subject.

1. While you are managing this Tryall, be sure you beware of such Doctrines as interfere and clash with the greatness, sovereignty and majesty of God, and tend to the diminishing of the honour and service due to him. The *Papists* as if they envied the preheminance of God, and were minded to jumble Heaven and Earth together, and level all into a common equality, make many insolent, and strange divisions. They divide *adoration* betwixt him and Images; *invocation* betwixt him and Saints; and absolute *obedience* betwixt him and the Church. Now
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Whitak.
part 1. cont.
1. q. 3. c.
9. p. 361.
Rainolds
Conf. ch. 2.
div. 3. p.
45.

what gross and horrible Sacrilege is this ? what is this but to devest him of his Royalty, and give his Glory unto another, which yet is a sin so great and hainous, that one would think they should tremble at the thoughts of it ? Beware how you fall in with these men ; keep up the honour of God intire, and reject all Doctrines that tend either to alienate or diminish it. It is he that made this stupendious Fabrick of the World, set it upon its Pillars, upholds it in its place, and by his supream direction, influence and conduct, orders and disposes of all persons, actions and events that are therein. It is he only that hath absolute-soveraignty, glory, and wisdom, and therefore it is he only that you must religiously adore, invoke and obey.

2. Beware of such Doctrines as tend in the least to disparage the Scripture, or bring it into contempt with you. It is the *candle of the Lord*, the Guide of the Soul, and the Rule and Judge of all Controversies in Religion whatsoever ; and therefore suffer it by no means to go out of esteem with you. Such Doctrines as tend to honour and credit it, close with them ; but as for those which tend to disparage and disgrace it, reject them as pernicious and dangerous blasphemies. The *Papists*, because it never speaks well of them, and that they may the better bring it into disesteem, say almost all manner of evil against it. They teach that the authority of it depends upon the Church, that it is obscure and imperfect, that the *Apocryphal* Books and humane *Traditions*, deserve as much reverence as it. And what is this but to reproach the wisdom

of God, and requite all the care and love he manifests to us in his Word with ingratitude and contempt. When you meet with any that preach such doctrine, if you cannot convince them, avoid them as the Agents of *Satan*, and such as seek to subvert and undo you.

3. Beware of such doctrines as tend to the dethroning of *Christ*, the disparaging of his undertakings and performances, or the diminishing any way of the honour and praise belonging to him. The *Papists* not thinking it sufficient to rob God, do likewise rob him, taking from him, and leaving with him what they think fit. They divide his Sovereignty and Headship betwixt him and the Pope, Satisfaction and Merits betwixt him and Saints; Invocation and Intercession betwixt him and Angels. And what is this but to tell him, he shall not reign over them, nor have the honour belonging to him? Take heed how you joyn with them in any such proceedings. As he is the undoubted Lord and King of his Church; so he hath undertaken the reconciling of God and Man, and the making of attonement betwixt them; and in order thereunto, he did in his death offer a valuable consideration unto Justice for the offence done, which he now pleads in Heaven, (where he sits at his Father's right hand interceding for us) and that so effectually, that to bring in the performances of any of his creatures, is to light a candle before the *Sun*, and carry water to the *Ocean*.

4. Beware of such doctrines as tend to the extenuating of God's free grace, and the exalting
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of mans free will. To exalt the former, and extenuate the latter, is to give unto God the things that are Gods, and unto man the things that are mans; but to extenuate the former and exalt the latter, is to give unto God the things that are mans, and unto man the things that are Gods. Notwithstanding the *Papists* divide the work of conversion betwixt the grace of God, and the will of man, making them partners in the effecting of it. And what is this but to take away the praise due unto God, and ascribe it to a silly impotent creature, that is as far from having power to convert himself, as he was from having power to make himself when he had no existence, or redeem himself when he was fallen. Be not you thus injurious to the grace of God; but seek unto him to work your conversion; and when he hath done it, give him all the praise. If you do erre, let it be on the right hand; do it rather in giving grace too much, than too little.

5. Beware of such doctrines as are against the power of godliness, and tend either to profaneness or lukewarmness. Acquaint your selves with, and yield obedience to all Gods commandments; serve him not onely with the outward, but the inward man. What ever ordinance or duty you undertake, be sure you ingage the soul in it. The *Papists* (at least many of them) that they may at the last stab Religion to the heart, and fill up the measure of their sins, divide man into soul and body; and then according to their wonted justice, speak, as if the one; and worse part thereof, were enough for
H 4 God.

God. He himself does every where in Scripture call upon us to manage his work with affection, seriousness, diligence, nay, with all our might; but they say, all this is not needful, persuading their credulous people, that the *opus operatum* is enough, that the celebrating of certain offices and rites, which they themselves have thought fit to prescribe, and the performing of some external trivial solemnities will serve the turn, without any more ado. And thus as they divide Faith betwixt Scripture and Tradition; Worship betwixt God and Images, Reconciliation betwixt Christ and Saints; Conversion betwixt Free-grace and Free-will: so likewise they divide Man into two parts, Soul and Body; and when they have done, they order God onely some superficial service, consisting in a company of empty childish Rites, from the latter, leaving us in the mean time to employ the former as our own prudence or inclinations shall direct us. And hereby we see, notwithstanding the flourishes and pretences that these men sometimes make to Religion, what friends they are to it. As if they thought it not sufficient injury unto God to detract from the authority of his Word, Worship, the performances of his Son, his free grace, they have at the last adventured to take from him the far better part of his creature, without the concurrence of which, the services of the other, how splendid and costly soever, are no more pleasing to him, than the noisome evaporations of a stinking carcase are to us. Have a care how you entertain such doctrines, or have to do with such men. Maintain and keep up the
love-

soveraignty of God, the authority of the Scriptures, the offices of Christ, the workings of divine grace, with the practice of godliness in their highest strength and glory, shunning all those as the enemies of God and true Religion that are adversaries thereunto.

Now because the non-performance of this duty of Christian trial proceeds from certain *impediments* that lie in the way. I shall therefore in the next place mention some of them, that so being acquainted with them, you may avoid the influence and danger of them. And the

1. Is a vain credulity or proneness that is in men, to credit what ever is propounded and rendred to them, especially if it come from such as they bear reverence and respect to. Such is the confidence that the generality of children have in their parents, servants in their masters, people in their Teachers, and one relation and friend in another, that they are ready, without any scruple or enquiry, to subscribe to what ever they deliver to them. The *Psalmist* observ'd in his time, that though the principles and courses of ancestors were never so absurd and foolish, yet their credulous successors, out of the indiscreet reverence they bore to them approv'd of them: *This their way (saith he) is their folly,* Psal. 49: *yet their posterity approve their sayings.* They did ^{13.} not weigh things as they ought to have done, and as wise men would have done, but looking upon the credit of their ancestors as a sufficient foundation to their faith and confidence, they assented to what ever they held or practis'd as found and good. Now this is a dangerous course,
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and leads to no other than delusion and misery. And therefore let men be what they will as to their places, abilities or pretences, take not every thing for truth that they deliver, but use your eyes, and satisfy your selves before you give your assent. This God himself does in express

Jer. 11. 6. terms require; *Even thy brethren (saith the Prophet) and the house of thy father, even they have dealt treacherously with thee, yea, they have called a multitude after thee, believe them not, though they speak fair words unto thee.* Here he dissuades the Jews from the credulity he saw them addicted to, admonishing them, that though the persons they had to deal with were never so near and dear to them, though they were their brethren and kinsfolk, though their pretences were never so specious and plausible, yet they should not without better evidence than their own word confide in them.

2. Is an unadvised presuming upon their own sudden apprehensions of what comes before them, as if they could by the cast of an eye fathom the depth of it, and pass a right judgment upon it. There is scarcely any man so illiterate or unskilful in Religion, but he thinks he may judge of things according to what at the first prospect or view they appear to him, and so looks upon all further enquiry as superfluous and needless; which is as dangerous as well as a groundless conceit, and may no better consist with our safety, than it may with those humbling and abasing thoughts, we ought to have of our selves. Had we retain'd our primitive light and innocency, we might better

better have lean'd upon our own wisdom, and confided in sudden apprehensions; but alas, its far otherwise with us. The highest Angels in the Church have in them some *folly*, and those whom God hath blessed with profoundest wisdom, know but *in part*. Their sight in the mysteries of salvation, is even like his who saw men *walking like trees*. What then shall we say of the common people, who fall almost as far short of them, as they do of perfection? May it then stand with their safety to trust to the first view of things? what is it else but to venture all (as it were) upon a die, and with the *Jesuites*, *alea luse contendere*, cast lots whether they shall do their duty or not, and consequently whether they shall be saved or damned?

Mar. 8. 24.

Vid. Ames
Bell: Enev.
1. 2. p. 234.

3. Is carelessness and regardlessness of truth, which they are so far from esteeming and thirsting after as they should, that they do not much matter whether they have it or not. So they can but secure their worldly happiness, and enjoy their honour, wealth and pleasure, they matter not whether they are in the right or wrong, or what kind of Religion takes place. Such a one was *Gallio* the *Proconsul*, or Deputy of *Achaia*, who though he saw the Gospel persecuted, and the servants of Christ trodden under foot, yet he *cared not*. And this is the disposition of the generality of people; so they can but dwell in their *cieled houses*, and sit under *their own vines and fig-trees*, they regard not the honour of God, nor care what becomes of his cause and truth.

Acts 18.
17.

4. Is laziness and slothfulness in the business of

of Religion, which indisposes them for all exercises and duties of this nature. Such is the temper of most, that though they are convinced the work is necessary, and ought by all means to be done, yet rather than they will be at the pains of it, they let it alone, and expose themselves to the danger that unavoidably attends the neglect of it. Though they can speak well of it, and wish it were done, yet out of meer slothfulness, instead of falling upon it, and managing it with life and vigour, as they ought, they lie stretching themselves upon their beds, saying with Solomon's sluggard, *Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep.* And what is the issue of it? why, their poverty comes as one that travelles, and their want as an armed man. As corporal slothfulness brings poverty and want upon the body, so spiritual slothfulness brings it upon the soul.

Prov. 6.
30.

5. Is multitude of worldly businesses, which wholly take up their thoughts, cares and parts, and engage them to such attendance on them, that they cannot spare time to look after things of a spiritual nature. *Felix* might have convers'd with *Paul*, and have had the truth, which he was a stranger to, from him; but his hands were so full of other matters, that he could not be at leisure to do it. The story of *Antipater* King of *Macedon* is well known; when one presented a book to him treating of happiness, his answer was, *ἐχέω, I am not at leisure.* And so likewise is that of the *Duke of Atos*, who when *Henry* the 4. of *France* asked him whether he had observed the Eclipses, he answered, No; with-

Acts 24.
35.

wichall adding, That he had so much to do upon *Earth*, that he had not leisure to look up to *Heaven*. And the reason wherefore many thousands omit to enquire after the truth, is, because they have already filled their hands so full of other matters, that they cannot without the neglect of them (which of all things they are loth to be guilty of) be at leisure to do it.

6. Is a desperate unmovable resolution to proceed and go forward in the ways wherein they are, let them be good or bad. Though they can render no reason at all for it, yet they like them so well, and are so in love with them, that they resolve to continue in them, let the issue be what it will. Thus the *Jews* in *Jeremy's* time carri'd themselves; let God and his Prophets say what they would, they were resolved to do what was good in their own eyes, and persist in the way they had propounded to themselves to walk in: *We will certainly (say they) do whatsoever thing goeth out of our own mouth, to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, &c.* They resolve not to do that which comes out of the mouth of the Lord, as once they pretended to do, when they said to *Moses*, *Speak unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee, and we will bear and do it;* no, but to do that which comes out of their own mouth. Neither do they do it with necessary limitations and restrictions, but with greatest absoluteness and peremptoriness, as those that had none to control or question them for it. And what is that particular thing that they thus resolve to do? why, to worship the Moon, here called (as divers

Jer. 44. 17.

Deut. 32.

Expo-

Vid. A
Lapid.com.
in Jer. 7.
18.

Luk. 23.
14.

Act. 23.
12.

Expositors think) *the Queen of Heaven*. Notwithstanding the many high, and eminent obligations that they lay under, to worship the true God, and him only, yet they resolve, and that with greatest peremptoriness, without rendring any good reason for it, that they will do otherwise. Their words imply as much as if they had said, notwithstanding all that we have heard and seen of God, and the many and various tyes that lye upon us to adhere and cleave to him, yet it is come into our minds to go after other Gods, and let what will be said to the contrary, we are resolv'd to do it. And after this manner the rude multitude carryed themselves towards Christ. Though they had nothing to alledge against him, yet they cry out, *Let him be crucified*. Though after all the advantagious hearing *Pilate* could afford them, they could urge nothing whereof they might accuse him, yet they cry out, *Let him be crucified*. Nay, though *Pilate* told them in plain terms that neither he nor *Herod* could finde any fault or cause of death in him, yet they still cry out, *Let him be crucified*. *q. d.* Whether he be guilty, or not guilty, faulty, or not faulty, we are resolved to have his Life, and therefore stand no longer reasoning with us, but *let him be crucified*. So we read how above forty impious and bloody Wretches bound themselves under a Curse, that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed *Paul*. Though he was one that had lived in all good Conscience amongst them, so that they had no just action in the World against him, yet having taken up a malicious prejudice towards him, they

they stand no longer to consult Justice, or Equity, but resolve to be his death. And thus it is with many in our dayes; having taken up (they know not how) a dislike of such a way, they are resolv'd to be against it, though evidence for it be never so plain and full. The reason wherefore divers will not be *Protestants*, is because they have taken up a Purpose against it; and having done that, they think it may not consist with their honour to comply and fall in with them. And when men are once got to this,* they are so far from being perswaded to bring things to tryall, that they do but despise all motions leading thereunto.

And thus I have laid before you some of the *impediments* that tend to hinder you from the duty I have in this Discourse cleared up and recommended to you. Let it now be your care to break through them, and overcome them. Give your selves no rest till you have found out what it is that God would have you to believe and do. Even as *Dauids* three mighty men broke through the Host of the *Philistims* to get to the Well of *Bethlehem*; so do you break through these and other impediments and difficulties that lie in your way, that so at last arriving at the Well of Truth, you may drink of the pleasant and wholesome streams that flow therefrom, and be for ever satisfied.

2 Sam. 23.
16.

FINIS.